

the confessions of a dl brother

by

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Introduction

an open letter to black women

first of all, i would like to say emphatically that to all black women – i love you!!! i respect you. i adore you. to me, there is nothing more powerful nor more sexy nor more divine than seeing you walk proudly in the sunlight of your blackness, your femininity, your sexuality, your sass, your strength, and your spirituality.

but sometimes, i want to taste a man

black woman, to me, you are god's gift to the entire world. all the women of the world want to be like you. they seek to emulate the beauty of your full lips, your broadened nose, your wide hips, and even the crown of hair upon your head. they try to talk like you, they try to walk like you, they even try to swivel their head and pop their gum like you. but, they just can't be you. only a black woman can be like a black woman.

but sometimes, i want to feel a man.....

there is nothing like making love to a black woman. i never have, nor do i ever plan to merge my body with any woman other than a black woman. there is something about our flesh when it comes together, when our sweat drips from one to the other, and when our sweet juices run together. i love to feel your body when you reach climax and when your loins contract tighter and tighter and then release. i love to hear you when you moan and groan and finally sigh and collapse back into the sheets.

but sometimes, i want to experience a man ... black woman.

i want you, a black woman, to be the mother of my children, the grandmother of my grandchildren, and the great-grandmother of my great-grandchildren. i want my legacy and my destiny to be forever etched with you – a black woman.

no other woman will do.

but sometimes, i need to be inside a man . . .

not any man, he has to be a black man. not white, not asian, not hispanic. he has to be black.

sometimes, i don't know why, but sometimes i just want to feel the warm, hard body of another black man laying under my body. sometimes, i long to hear another man's groan, just like i long to hear your groans. late in the night, i want to hear him moaning deeply, just like i want to hear you moaning. i desire to feel his body tense up as my manhood enters him just like i desire to feel your body tense up as my manhood enters you. sometimes, i want to just feel his full round lips wrapped around my manhood just like i desire to feel your sweet lips wrapped around my manhood. sometimes, i just need to pour my juices into another man just like i need to pour my juices into you.

yes, sometimes i want to taste, touch, feel, penetrate, and experience a man . . and, when i want a man – i want a man. i don't want some brother who thinks he's a woman or tries to act like one. if i want a woman, i'll get a woman. but, when i want a man, i want a hard, strong, masculine black man. i want to a man who's just as manly as me. i want to enter him deeply. i want to feel my pelvis against his buttocks, my chest against his back, and my sweaty skin against his sweaty skin.

i'm not trying to love a man or kiss a man or any of that. i just want to go inside him. there's something about the hardness of his body and the tightness of his backside that makes me want to taste what he's got.

it's not that i don't love black women, i just like to feel myself inside a man . . .

it's not that i'm gay, homosexual, bisexual or any of those things. i don't claim any of those titles and so if you ask me if i'm gay, homo, or bi – i'll tell you "no". i'm just a brother that knows what he likes. that's all.

now, if you ask me if i have sex with men, i'll tell you "no". yes, i know that lying is wrong and god don't like ugly. but, if i laid with you, and made sweet love to you, and then told you that sometimes i like to go inside a man . . . you wouldn't want me. our relationship would be over. and, more than likely, you would "warn" your friends about me. and so, i lie. not because i am trying to deceive you, but because i just don't think you need to know. all it will do is destroy what we have.

you see, honesty is not as simple as you think

one day i'll stop, i'll settle down with my black queen. i can't promise that i'll completely stop experiencing men. there's just something about it that draws me. but, i do know that i won't do it nearly as much.

well i don't know that, but i don't think i'll do it as much.

to the woman i will one day marry: i promise to be a good husband, and a good father to our children, and a good grandfather to our children. i'll love you, and protect you, and cherish you, and make you laugh, and dry your tears, try to give you the kind of home you have always wanted, and do my best to make your life as happy as it can be.

but sometimes, i'll still want a man.....

rayman jackson - august 2003

chapter 1

renee

sometimes i wonder

what is inside our core

i mean

the core of our being

our essence,

our souls

that which

causes us to do

the things we do

when we do them

and then causes us

to stop doing

those same things

and

maybe even

renounce them

it makes me think

that we never stop doing

the things we started doing

as children

maybe

we never stopped playing

the same games

we just simply

found a new playground

it was seven a.m. on july fifth.

i woke up and looked around my slightly ruffled but otherwise neat studio apartment. soft, gentle light from a soon-to-be-blazing, yellow-orange morning sun was streaming like precisely thrown daggers through the dusty, hunter green blinds, it danced across the highly polished, oak dresser, raced across the floor and dived into the bed where i laid nude with a likewise unclothed fine black sister.

i looked at a hairless light tan calf and a delicate size six, pedicured foot with neatly painted white painted nails that was protruding suggestively from a pile of satin, dark blue sheets. i closed my eyes and thought for a few seconds to remember her name. if i recalled correctly, her name was renee.

i had met renee at a july fourth party the night before at dedron's place down south by the bannister mall. dedron, a fraternity brother and former co-worker of mine, held these summer parties every year. i never missed one. dedron's parties were nice functions with a cool upscale crowd.

with my eyes still closed, i remembered that, when i first saw renee, she was standing by the pool with her girlfriends, sipping on some coconut rum and talking about leaving dedron's to see some fireworks at the lake . after about two seconds of contemplation, i approached her.

as i figured, i had all the fireworks she could handle.

i closed my eyes and tried to picture renee's entire luscious body. last night, after renee and i had left dedron's place and came to my loft, i had seen her body ever so briefly under some dim candlelight. i wanted to remember what i saw, so i closed my eyes tighter and concentrated some more. with a little effort, i recalled that renee was about five foot two and a shapely one hundred and twenty pounds or so.

a self-satisfied smile crossed my face as i recalled renee's frisky, upright tan breasts with sweet chocolate nipples that perfectly complemented her nice tight round ass.

like most women i liked, renee had some nice spacious hips, built to accommodate an athletically wide brother like myself who enjoyed long sessions pounding the pussy.

renee moaned and turned over. i sat up, blinked some sleep from my eyes and turned to look at her. a few blades of light were falling gently on her face.

renee's delicate features were eloquently framed with shoulder length, straight, jet black hair. in fact, renee's mane had a very nice soft sheen to it. i recalled that, when i first saw renee, her hair appeared to be gleaming under the hawaiian torches at dedron's place. however, her hair didn't have that starchy and overdone look that brothers like myself didn't particularly care for.

i recalled that, when open, renee's wide dark eyes were slightly almond shaped, like she had some asian in her lineage but her mouth was one hundred percent black sista-gurl. renee had some inviting juicy thick lips that protruded out as if to announce to the brothers "i can suck a dick like a motherfucker!".

renee had given me a lengthy taste the night before of her more than adequate cock sucking skills. i had no doubt in my mind that many more demonstrations were forthcoming.

laying back into the pillow, i squinted my eyes and tried to remember what renee had on last night. from what i could recall, renee wore a provocatively short, thin, and white strapless dress. the way that dress hung on renee was clearly provocative but not at all sleazy. i allowed my imagination to slowly recall this dress from the point where it cut cross her chest down just above her nipples to the place where it ended just a foot or so above her knees. finally, renee's stylish outfit was perfectly complemented by some shiny white sandals and a delicate, diminutive, gold trimmed white purse.

i chuckled to myself as i remembered that renee had some very pronounced and prominent nipples. renee's nipples weren't gargantuan or anything, but they were very prominent and, under her thin white dress, made their presence known. last night, renee's nipples just seemed to be struggling to burst forth from her outfit as if they were being forcibly restrained under the thin white fabric. those nipples clearly had gained my attention.

so, when i first saw renee, i assumed that either she didn't wear a bra or she was wearing one that purposely made her nipples scream out for notice. sometimes, sisters rolled like that. as far as i was concerned, renee wasn't blind and she wanted men to notice her goods. i was comfortable with that. to me, there was no harm in a sister doing her thing the way she saw fit. i had a lot of respect for a black woman with a healthy self-confidence for their own sexuality. strong sexuality like that just made me want to get with a sister even more.

overall, renee's look was definitely sexy and classy. her appearance effortlessly maintained a loose and flimsy look while still clinging to renee's sultry body like it was painted on. the tightness of renee's outfit made her look sexy as all hell while it's looseness made a brother long to get her out of it and naked as soon as humanly possible.

finally, it was time to get up. i opened my eyes, sat up, and swung my legs over the side of the bed. stretching my arms, i yawned quietly not to awake renee. she was still very much asleep.

more soft yellow sunlight was starting to filter in through blinds, gently bars of light across the bed, renee, and myself. a few months before, i replaced the light filtering, vertical blinds that were pre-installed in my apartment with room darkening blinds that only let in the amount of light you adjusted them for. on mornings like this, when i could lay in bed all day long, i was glad i had changed the blinds.

in a small, brick, loft apartment, with no dividing walls (except for the restroom), there's simply no place for a weary person who's been up all night long to conceal his tired soul from a merciless torrent of undeviating, morning sunlight. for an individual like me, who engaged in a steady torrent of late night trysts, inescapable blasts of morning sunlight was not always a good thing. yes, these new blinds were a very good thing.

as i stretched my legs, i contemplated the fact that closing my eyes and trying to jar facts from my memory was a mental game that i liked to play with myself. i enjoyed concentrating and trying to remember details as fully and vividly as i possibly could and then sharing them with astonished female. i felt that this mental exercise kept my mind fresh, alert, and perceptive. this amusement also had other, more intimate, benefits.

in my experiences, i had learned that women loved a man who remembered details about her, especially the most obscure and minute ones. i had concluded that quality sisters come back again and again to the brothers who know how to make them feel incredibly unique and undeniably important. i reasoned that casually mentioning minute details that most men would quickly disregard made women feel important and cherished and kept them coming back.

i prided myself on being able to remember and tell a sister exactly what she had on the first time i saw her, what perfume she wore and handbag she carried the first time we went out, what color and shade of lipstick a sister had on the first time our lips embraced, what sounds we made the first time we had an orgasm together, and other intimate details like this.

slowly opening my still weary eyes all the way, i tenderly slid down to the end of the bed, not to disturb renee, and gazed slowly across the oak hardwood floor, looking for debris from last night's encounter.

i could feel renee moan, mumble, and sleepily move around under the covers, repositioning herself. she was very comfortable. that was good sign. i could tell that renee had done the "let's fuck on the first date" thing before. i wasn't going to attempt to flatter myself by telling myself i was renee's first one night stand. i had no time for that bullshit. some men frowned on women who one night stands. i didn't. i had no problems with it. it was routine for me.

to me, one sign of a woman who regularly sleeps with men she just met is how well she sleeps that first night. in my experience, the first few times a woman engages in a casual sex sleepover, they tended to be nervous about allowing themselves to fall into a deep sleep and be fully vulnerable.

i didn't blame those sisters. i knew that some brothers are truly sick and twisted. there's no telling what some deranged man would do to a sleeping woman.

but, one night stands are like a lot of things. after the first few times a person does it, they get comfortable with it. soon, it becomes routine and even expected. for me, one night stands were clearly habit.

still looking onto the floor, i realized that my memory was correct. there was a pair of tiny black satin thong panties and a crumpled white dress laying haphazardly on the floor next to my black, square shaped, remote control. renee's purse was neatly laid on top of the dress.

i was hoping that in our movement to the bed the night before, we didn't inadvertently tread on the remote control and break it. that had already happened to me few times. i figured that's what i got for leaving expensive electronic devices laying on the floor.

i looked over to the large, oak, front door. there was a black bra hanging nonchalantly over the shining brass doorknob. for a moment, i thought about it. i wasn't sure that i knew how it got there. maybe some other sister had left it behind. sometimes they did that.

after looking around and not seeing any other bras laying around, i assumed it was renee's and left it there. i still couldn't figure how it would be on the door and the dress and panties by the bed. who knows? maybe she or i threw it over there and it just landed on the doorknob.

tenderly getting up from the bed, i could feel a thin layer of crisp film from dried up semen and pussy lubricant all over my dick and shaved testicles. it was like a coating of dried glue or something, and the film made my dick feel as if it were wedged to the side of my leg.

i grabbed my crusty dick and moved it around so that it felt more comfortable to me. i could feel a smug smirk run across my face. my friend mario explained to me that an abundance of dried sexual fluid across the genitals were the undeniable evidence of a very hot, passionate, and freaky night. if mario was correct, then last night was off the hook.

after going into the bathroom and doing that early morning urination thing that men do, then washing my face and hands, i went around my red brick loft apartment and quietly picked up scattered items from the past week. i rolled up and threw away some old newspapers, magazines, a pizza box, a soda bottle and other stuff. my loft was already small and trash made it look even smaller. in my loft, i didn't have many furnishings. purposely, i had adopted a minimalist decorating scheme in my place. therefore, i cleaned constantly. i liked to keep things simple, neat and orderly. in the morning, i liked waking up to a crisp clean apartment. and, at the end of the day, i loved going to sleep to one.

ladies liked an orderly, tidy apartment too. i had discovered that, with women, a man who had too many material things is “suspect”.

a lot of women would assume they he may have gay tendencies. i thought that women seem to feel that men who have less possessions in their place are more masculine. to me, i figured that it was a derivative of some kind of neanderthal influence on human relationships. of course, i accepted that it may just be my own paranoia and homophobia taking me to those conclusions.

i had given my place a minimalist scheme. my living room furniture was nothing but a loveseat, a glass coffee table, a torch lamp, and a television.

in my bedroom, i had just placed the box spring and mattress on some concrete cinder blocks that i had purchased from a home remodeling store. i didn't have a bed frame. as a result my bed sat low. along with a tall dresser, a small desk with a notebook computer, and a mirror, that was the extent of my bedroom furnishings.

that was it. simple and sweet. i liked it that way.

there was a buzzing on the small clear glass coffee table. it was my tiny silver cell phone indicating that someone was trying to reach me. i always set it to vibrate when i was planning for some serious sexual action. i didn't want anything disturbing me when i was getting my freak on. i had long since discovered that there's nothing like an unexpected phone call from one woman to really mess up sex with another woman.

in fact, i also unplugged the phone from the wall and turned off the answering machine when i had company over. experience had taught me that it was a wise move.

a few years ago, i was going down on a sister in her house, in her waterbed, when another unsuspecting brother called and left a lengthy, graphic message about his torrid escapade with her the night before and what he planned to do the next time he got with her. it didn't cause me to take my mouth off of her pussy, i just couldn't believe that she left her answering

machine on like that with another man over. i guess she just didn't care. then again, i felt that to each his own. if she liked it, i loved it.

i also disabled the intercom when i had company over. that way, if another sister or brother came by, they would never even know if i were home or not. it wasn't easy to disable, but i was determined that day. i remembered that there was no switches on the speaker itself. so, i had to find some tools, unscrew it myself, and rig a way to disable it whenever i wanted. the privacy was well worth the effort.

i took the cell phone into the restroom, turned on the water, and closed the door. flipping it open, i whispered "hello?"

"sup, rayman." answered a gruff baritone voice on the other end.

it was robert, an older fraternity brother of mine and lover, on the other line. he was at the party last night with his beautiful, pregnant wife safa. they left after i did and so i was a little surprised to hear from robert this early. then again, robert always had a good reason to call, if not always selfish. he was an urgent type of person. i think they called them "type a" personalities.

his wife, safa, was more of a laid back person. she was from the islands. in fact, i had once visited the very island she came from. it was very laid back and relaxed. i figured that's why she was the way she was.

dark skinned and with long straight hair, she was the epitome of exotic-pregnant-sexy. whereas many women just get bigger when pregnant, safa got bigger, rounder, and curvier. safa's crescent shaped butt had gotten rounder and more prominent and pronounced. her large succulent breasts had gotten perkier and more upright.

not that i am fixated on nipples, but, like many others, that sister had some major ones. her nipples just seemed to rise up and challenge a brother. they were so big and elevated. they looked like someone had snatched them off the top of a baby bottle and imbedded them beneath her shirt. they were very, very nice.

with her pure black ebony skin dramatized by her crimson maternity short set, safa and robert were the talk of the party. everyone was happy for them, including me. they made a beautiful couple.

i always liked to see good black people reproduce. we need more good black people in this world.

well, robert had asked what i was doing.

“nothing. just cleaning up a bit.” i responded.

“did you knock off that honey i saw you leave with?” robert inquired.

as usual, robert was curious. even though he was married, he loved to hear about my scorching bedroom exploits. sometimes, i wondered if robert had gotten married too young and felt like he missed out.

then again, robert had lost both his parents while still in junior high school, was raised by a very emotionally distant aunt and uncle, and always struck me as a somewhat lonely brother. looking back, i could see why he may have felt an urgency to get married young.

“no doubt, nigga, no doubt.” i confirmed with robert that i had slept with renee.

robert was silent for a moment. i could hear him inhaling deeply on the other end of the line. at times like this, i felt that robert had a problem with me sleeping with women also.

“safa just left...she gonna be gone all day.....” robert said softly with his faux sexy female voice.

i knew where this was going. it had been going this way for a few years now.

“and.....” i replied teasingly “..what you want me to do?” of course, i knew. i always knew what robert liked.

i could hear robert laughing on the other end. he loved this back-and-forth sexual banter that we did.

“i want you to come and hit it from the back....baby!” robert replied with some faux sass to go with the female voice.

i decided to do my clint eastwood “nasty harry” thing.

“ten o’clock.” i replied with a clinical coolness.

“i don’t think i can wait that long!” pleaded robert.

robert didn’t like to wait for anything.

“nine thirty, bruh....i’m gonna pop this sister one more time before leave.” i said with a laugh.

“ooooooooook..” sighed robert. he sounded disappointed, but he wouldn’t have to wait long.

that was typical robert. he wanted it right now but he was going to have to wait. as i said before, robert was one brother who didn’t like to wait for anything. robert even routinely got needless speeding tickets by recklessly rushing here and there. then again, robert could afford a good attorney to make them go away quickly. that was robert’s thing. it was all good to me. at the same time, i considered robert to be a good brother. he did help people whenever possible and sat on a number of community improvement and empowerment boards.

on a more personal note, robert had helped me to secure this spanking new downtown loft apartment at a price about three fourths what the other tenants were paying. through robert’s assistance, i was able to obtain a housing grant designed for police officers, firefighters, and teachers who chose to live within certain urban areas that had been designated as empowerment zones. i really liked this place and was grateful to robert for his help.

i flipped the cellular phone closed to shut it off, turned off the water, and left the restroom. slowly, i strolled into the dim, kitchen area. as usual, it was spotless and gleaming. not being

a very good cook, i rarely ate at home. on the rare occasions that i dined at home, it was usually takeout or microwave food. my kitchen stayed clean.

i stopped for a second and looked at the gleaming stainless steel cabinet doors and new appliances. there were a few fingerprints and smudges on the refrigerator door. i reached for a paper towel and some glass cleaner and quickly wiped them off.

i was still nude. i was feeling really lazy today. if renee didn't have to go to work and robert hadn't called, i might have planning on staying nude all day long.

as i walked into the kitchen, i could feel the embossed diamond pattern on the cool, white porcelain tile underneath my feet. the tile was modernistic, like everything in the kitchen. in fact, my entire kitchen area was designed in stainless steel. that's what sold me on these downtown, loft apartments. they spoke of urban, contemporary cool. from the red brick walls to the shiny and flawless hardwood floors, these apartments had a slick post-modernist deco. it seemed that sisters and brothers loved it too.

opening the nearly empty fridge, i grabbed a bottle of cold, sweet coffee. i needed a blast of energy because i was doing double duty before lunch today. first was renee, then a quick shower and a dash over to robert's. after popping the top off and tossing it into the trash basket, i made my way past a wall of mirrors attached to the wall and over to the bed. i kept my eyes close to the floor as i walked.

my bed sat on a part of the loft elevated about a foot from the rest of the apartment, so i had to watch my step. when i first moved in here, i actually tripped and fell several times because i staggered in half-drunk and forgot about the fact that there was one big step up to the bed. one time, i even tripped and dropped a sister i was carrying over my shoulder to the bed. it was all good. we just laughed and had sex on the hardwood floor. i wasn't doing that again. my knees were sore for three days.

drinking down my coffee as stepped up to the bed, i looked at the tri-fold full length mirror that stood in the corner. i had purchased it at a clearance sale at a mall some time ago. several businesses were leaving the mall and were even selling their hardware. this was one

of those mirrors people stood in front of when they tried on new clothes. it was about six feet tall, trifold, and with a chrome wire. it was cool. i liked it. in fact, i had positioned it so that if a sister and i were making love with our bodies facing the foot of the bed, i could look up and watch ourselves.

“not bad.” i mumbled as he looked at my naked body in the full length mirror. i liked to look at myself and i did it often. standing about six feet one and weighing about one hundred ninety pounds, i was a cut and chisled brother. this was one of the few facts of my life that i was truly proud of.

it was only logical that i be in good shape. still in my early thirties, i spent at least a couple hours in the gym nearly every day and stuck to my nutritional plan most of the time.

sometimes i would splurge for weeks at a time and then i had to work out extra hard to burn off the fat that i had gained. but i was determined to stay muscular and trim.

i looked at my dark skin and rubbed shiny bald head. i smiled and turned my head a few times to see if my teeth still looked bright and white. robert said that i had a look and smile that the women and men loved. i guess that one of the few things my parents left me was good skin and good teeth. they were nearly perfectly straight and gleaming white, even though i drank coffee from time to time. then again, i didn't smoke and i was told that smoking did more to darken teeth than coffee.

still engrossed in myself, i turned to the side, flexing my arms and watched the round bicep rise up like an entrapped softball. turning back to face the mirror, i placed my hands behind my head, flexed my abdomen, and watched my six pack ripple up and down like waves on a beach.

finally, turning my back to the mirror and then turning my head nearly one hundred and eighty degrees to see, i tightened my buttocks. they were firm, round, tight, and hard, i liked that about them. i knew that women and men liked that too.

i laughed as i thought about the fact that some sisters liked to grab my buttocks too, especially when i had their legs up and was driving deep inside her. they claimed it was for

traction. i liked to tease them and tell them that i suspected they had lived as gay men in a previous life. some sisters called me vain. especially after our encounters ended. but i didn't think i was vain. i just took pride in my looks and tried to look my best. that was just me, i figured.

"get over here with your conceited ass!" a naughty soft voice laughed in my bed.

it was renee, she was sitting up in the bed. her black hair was thrown all over her head, covering one eye and making her look like some kind of seductive model. renee looked at me for a second, then lowered her head, shook it, and just laughed at what she just witnessed.

"you just think you are off the chain, don't you?" she laughed.

i just shrugged and threw up my hands.

"get over here and break me off, i have to go to work in a couple of hours.." renee chuckled.

she kicked the sheets off of her legs and spread them wide so that her privates were opened like some kind of erotic brunch buffet.

by this time, the early morning sun was blasting through the vertical blinds creating thin stripes of vivid yellow light on renee's body. i could see tiny hairs on her body glistening like a sea of infinitesimal strands of polished copper. this was the first time i had seen renee nude in the light. i noted that her pussy was neatly shaved and bare. i looked at the way she was propped up, beckoning me to join her in bed and i was wondering if she was going to ask me to go down. i didn't particularly like to eat new pussy – especially if i didn't know where a woman had been. then again, sometimes, it simply depended on how much alcohol i had in my system at the time.

i could feel my dick getting hard. soon it would be rock hard. i looked down, smiled, and looked up at renee. renee's eyes were fixated on my dick. her head just moving from side to side in apparent anticipation. renee's tongue was hanging from her mouth, and she was licking her lips in a slow circular motion. renee leaned back, reached out, and motioned me to come. she looked like one of those guys at the airport directing planes on the runway.

tossing the empty coffee bottle into the trash, i headed towards the bed.....and renee.

as i slid across the bed and in between renee's open legs, i thought about the rest of my morning plans. after another round with her, i would cruise over to robert's and show him conclusively that i could successfully "double dip" in the morning without any decrease whatsoever in performance.

"i could do this all summer." i thought as i rested on renee and smoothly glided my rigid dick deep into her hot, wet, tight pussy without any foreplay whatsoever.

robert

as a high school teacher

sometimes, i feel quite disturbed

why is it

that our young black brothers

seem to see our sisters as only

baby making machines

it really pisses me off

to see these thirteen and fourteen

year old girls

waltzing into my classroom

with their short ass skirts

and tight ass tops

their

bellies full like ripe watermelons

navels protruding

like some kind of

tiny phallus

their fertile wombs

ready to burst

and spew their seed

into the world

where is the

sense of

responsibility

but in a way i understand

we now have generation after generation

of teenage fathers and mothers

it is no longer an aberration

a transgression

or a iniquitous blot on our people

no

it's a subculture

an entire population within a population

a people within a people

where you have
twenty nine year old
grandmothers
and
grandfathers
and forty year old
great grandmothers and great grandfathers
these young niggaz
ain't gonna ever change
it's too late now
i'm so glad
i'm not like them

robert and his wife lived in a very nice mini-tudor gray brick home in the affluent mission area. after he had been promoted to senior account executive at the investment firm downtown, he had purchased that house. apparently, it had belonged to a former client and he was able to arrange some kind of ridiculously low interest loan program through his employer. sounds like robert. he gets what he wants.

his wife had done a fine job furnishing the house. she filled with it plush beige carpeting, lots of ethnic throw rugs, and lots of african artifacts and furnishings in african based colors. she even specially ordered appliances that were painted in afrocentric colors. i had never seen a refrigerator that was yellow, rd, and green until i went to their house. in a way, going into their home was like visiting some kind of eclectic import store.

as i walked in the front door, robert came out from the guest room with a knee length black silk robe on. he looked like some kind of billionaire hedonist vacationing in the fiji islands or someplace.

robert had a stunningly handsome face. he had deep bronze flawless skin. from it, he gazed at me through eyes that were large and dark. robert's lips and nose were thick and full. he had a real thick goatee and mustache. in fact, his hair was not like most black people's hair. he had what they call "good hair". his curls were large and wavy, like some kind of lebanese camel sheik.

robert always kept his hair very neatly cut. with his usually busy schedule, i think that either he had a barber come to his house or his wife lined his hair for him. the man was so crisp, he looked like he could do movies.

robert was a very large man. i think the brother was pushing three or four hundred pounds. he definitely ate very, very well and could afford to do so. i sometimes joked with him that he looked like a big black bowling ball with arms and legs.

at first, i thought it might hurt his feelings with jokes like that but as time went on, i realized it didn't bother him too much. he liked the big black teddy bear image.

however, what he lost in fitness, robert made up in intellect. the brother was downright brilliant when it came to matters of finance and economics. he had a b.a, m.b.a., and had completed everything but the dissertation for a doctorate degree in business administration. according to robert, he never had any grade below an a on any test, quiz, or final examination. i believed him. the man was just plain brilliant.

but, robert liked to play. he liked fine looking women...and men...and me. robert was a true freak and i wondered if his wife knew it or was just that naïve to the reality.

i tried think about whether or not his wife knew. even though i sometimes felt that i was in denial to myself, i told myself that it wasn't my problem. noone had ever warned me when a sister was about to burn me and so i figured that it's a person's own responsibility to know about their mate. they can't blame the people their mate is seeing, they can only blame their mate.

then again, from everything i had seen and witnessed, i think mating is overrated. as far as i was concerned, you just can't trust anyone.

sometimes, in various after-coitus chats with men and women around the city, i would hear them describe a very fat, dark skinned black business executive that lived in mission hills. i knew inside that they were talking about robert.

you didn't have hardly any blacks in kansas city that were business executives. and, mission hills had so few blacks that when a black person drove through, white people walking down the street or mowing their grass would stop what they were doing and just stare at you. sometimes, they would even call 911 and report "suspicious black people in the area".

turning around and letting the satin robe drop to the floor, robert vanished into the guest room. "he is such a trick" i thought to himself as i locked the front door behind me.

robert was trusting. he had even given me a key to the front door for times like this.

i made my way across the plush carpet and towards the bedroom. i could hear robert throwing his robe to the floor and resting his massive frame on the bed. "that is one heavy man." i thought as i could hear the wooden frame strain and creak under the sheer mass of this brother.

the house that robert shared with his wife was quiet. too quiet. it was nearly soundproof. this house was so quiet that fire trucks or ambulances passing on the street right outside were barely audible inside. but, i liked it. it made the house peaceful and tranquil.

there was also a large fountain in the living room. it was about eight feet tall and five feet wide and made of some kind of rock that looked like wood. it was carved with all sorts of exotic and bizarre african looking masks. there were round masks with squared eyes and triangular masks with diamond shaped eyes and mouths.

appearing like dark wood with etchings and carvings in tan, the fountain just seemed to vibrate as water ran down from a mouth at the top of the fountain and into a mock bowl being held by some kind of african woman.

the sound of the water trickling down was very rhythmic and easy to fuck to. you could hear it very well in the guest room and it sort of created a beat to pump by even when robert was moaning and groaning loudly from hard poundings he liked me to give him.

robert liked to screw in the guest room. it was kind of different. most times when i slept with married women or men, they liked to do it in their normal bed, the one they shared with their spouse. i figured it had something to do with the reason they were screwing someone other than their spouse.

usually, they were pissed at the spouse over something or just plain unhappy and it seemed that giving it up to someone else in the very same bed that you sleep with your spouse in provided some kind of sick vindictive satisfaction.

the king sized black laquer guest bed was covered in black sheets with a big picture of a tiger on it. the bed had a huge half-crescent mirror at the head of it. i could see myself as i pounded into robert.

i was standing at the foot of the bed with my feet on the floor, my hardened cock thrusting deep into robert's hot, tight anus. he was on his back, his immense chocolate legs raised up and his massive black thighs rising like oak trees next to the sides of my muscular chest while his thick but flabby calves draped over my shoulders. it was hot, sweaty, and very very nasty.

while he laid there, writhing in ecstasy, he started licking his fingers and then chewing on his wrist. looking in the mirror, i could see myself grimacing and long streams of salty sweat beading up from my forehead and trickling profusely down my face.

handling this brother was a lot of work. his size alone made it a big job. you had to have muscle and stamina to knock this brother's back out. plus you had to be able to "reach it" with your dick. that was one reason that i was one of robert's favorite 'friends'. i could reach it. not being able to reach can be a problem for some people. it's the same way even with a woman. not that it's always a body size issue, sometimes it's a position issue. some men have dicks so short that it precludes them from doing certain positions. such is life.

the room was really starting to get funky. it was early july and even though robert had central air, it just didn't seem to be blowing that strong. i was hoping that robert would have taken a shower before i got over there. apparently he didn't. it was really starting to smell like someone had let loose with a big wet juicy fart. well, robert didn't seem to notice and so i just tried to breathe through my mouth.

the sounds, the smell, the waiting for his wife to leave. this was freaky, hot, and nasty. it was a little secret that robert and i shared. then again, when he had his mouth on me, he liked to call it a 'big' secret that we shared. the brother made me laugh with his enchantment with my dick.

as i looked in the mirror, i began to think to myself. i guess i could call it talking to myself without opening my mouth. sometimes, i had to do that. i really didn't know why. but, sometimes, if i didn't do it, i would lose my erection.

"i don't consider myself gay or even bisexual. i don't believe in that stuff. i was raised in the baptist church and i believe the bible."

i believe in adam and eve, not adam and steve. homosexuality, as far as i am concerned, is against god and nature.

so, what robert and i do is not sex to me because two men cannot have sex. i'm just hanging with the brother, that's all. as far as the physical contact goes, i don't think it is any different from two women doing each other's hair or painting each other's nails. if a woman has another woman do her hair or paint her nails, would you call her a lesbian? i don't think so. but, they definitely touch each other. they just are not touching genitals. so, i'm cool"

"ohhhhhhhhh." robert moaned. he was clearly nearing climax.

"c'mon big daddy." i shouted, coaching him along. he liked for me to be real assertive and commanding when he was ready to cum.

"yessssssssss." robert screeched. i could feel his mammoth legs tightening up and i could see his stomach beginning to harden up.

"daddy...." he groaned. i was tired and hoping this was it.

"yessssssssssssssssssssssss" robert groaned again, this time after i reached down and slapped his hairy upraised buttock.

"papa...it's all yours papa...."

"deeper....deeper"

now it was time for really push it in. i leaned forward and tilted robert's immense legs back. way back.

“ahhhh...ahhhh...ahhhh” robert started screaming, his voice getting louder and deeper with each one.

finally he arched his back, keeping his massive palms flat on the sheets. leaning back his head like a wolf howling in the plains, he issued one final groan.

“Օհիհիհիհիհիհիհիհիհիհիհիհիհի”

and he was finished.

i pulled out and sat on the edge of the bed.

silence passed.

while robert rolled up the sheets and took them to the washroom, i pulled my clothes on. i couldn't stay long. i had things to do, bills to pay and stuff like that.

i went to the restroom to wash myself off and came back out a few minutes later. upstairs. water was running. that was robert. after it was over, he would just leave and go take a shower. he had nothing to say. in fact, he didn't even want to look at you afterwards. he would just snatch the sheets off, throw them in the washer, and head for the shower.

maybe he was trying to wash something off besides sweat. guilt maybe. shame maybe. denial maybe. i quit doing that years ago. i quit trying to wash anything away, i just gave it my own names, my own terminology. putting my dick into a man was not sex to me, it was hanging out. so, there was nothing to wash out. putting my dick into one woman in the morning and another one in the afternoon and maybe even still another one late into the night was no longer sex to me. i just called it hanging out. spending time with a friend. we were just

friends. there were no expectations and no commitments. there were no judgements and no character evaluations.

it worked for me. that's the one thing i was totally sure of.

i sat down in one of safa and robert's tall african chairs and just leaned back. my head was feeling light. i really needed to eat something. other than renee's pussy, the only thing that had been on my lips that morning was some coffee. "i really need to make sure i eat breakfast, even if i have company." i thought to myself.

i leaned back in the chair and for a few minutes i listened to the rhythmic sound of the water running upstairs. combined with the soft trickling sound from the stone african fountain in the living room, it created a quietly soothing symphony. for a few minutes, i closed my eyes and just let my mind drift within itself.

niggaz today

are like warriors

without a war

to keep them busy

when you really

look at things

niggaz today

are just treading water

shit ain't getting much better

and it's not getting much worse

we just be
we just be
existing
we have a few so called
leaders
leading a few
so called
marches and boycotts
but they just ring
hollow
with echoes of long departed
meaning and
long since gone
significance
like an abandoned house rings
with the ghosts
of old happenings
when you
shout your name

into it's broken

windows

my mother used to tell me

'black men ain't shit

never were shit

and never will be

shit'

i like to think

that i'm shit

but

i can't speak

for anyone else

i made sure that i locked the door behind me as i left. as i slowly walked down the brick sidewalk to my car, i thought about the fact that robert was so aloof and callous after we had sex. in fact, he was kind of cruel.

confrontation

i really like the ambiance of my loft on a lazy summer afternoon. this was one of the things i liked about being a teacher, while all of my peers were trapped in stale offices, shuttled away into tiny cubicles, buried under piles of paperwork behind a desk, or riding in some hot ass car to their next appointment – i could just sit back in the air conditioned comfort and chill. i loved it. despite the relatively low pay, this was one of the perks of teaching. my summertime was my time. it was free and i loved it.

as i loved to do so much, i was sitting in my crib with the lights out, some coltrane on the cd and the television on mute. my blinds were sort of one eighth open so that lines of light raced across the floor and the bed, my two pieces of living room furniture, into the kitchen, up the fridge, and onto the ceiling.

earlier, i had vacuumed, dusted, washed the sheets, and so now my place was smelling as fresh as fresh could be. it had a nice lavender sage scent to it. sort of hard to describe. sort of woodsy like a forest but at the same time it was sort of delicate like flowers.

to be honest, i really liked the disinfectant smell. i don't know why. sometimes, i liked for my place to smell like a freshly scrubbed and disinfected operating room. ladies seemed to like it too. i liked to keep it ready in case i got horny and wanted to call one of my 'friends'. women loved a simple, clean crib. and i loved for women to love me. of course, that depends on whether you want to call what i had going on – love.

as i looked on the simple glass shelf under the main window, i took a mental note to get some more cocoa butter lotion and vanilla. i also remembered that i needed to get some more fragrance oil at the scent shop down on main. that was one thing that i did not run out of. vanilla, cocoa butter lotion, and fragrance oil.

i had discovered from a brother in college that if you take three or four cups of cocoa butter lotion, add a few tablespoons of vanilla extract, and finish it with a liberal dosage of fragranced oil – it made a very aromatic and potent massage lotion. i would mix the three and then heat it in the microwave oven. taking the entire warm bowl to the bed, i would scoop some up into my hands and rub a sister or brother down from head to toe. put some jazz on the cd and some candles at the same time, and you could have a sister or brother addicted to your shit in no time.

it was little things like that that kept sisters and brothers coming back even if they knew i was up to some scandalous shit on the side. i mean, i wasn't dealing with imbeciles here, these brothers and sisters knew that i was out fucking other folks unless they were just plain brain dead. but, after some many years of disappointing relationships, i think a lot of them had just adopted "give me an orgasm and i won't ask for much more" mentality. that happens.

in all honesty, i think that most single folks i knew over the age of thirty had long gone past the stage of optimism where they were looking for the "soulmate", "ebony king", or "nubian queen". after so many heartbreaks and disappointments, they had just given up on the idea of finding "the one", getting married, and raising their beautiful black family.

now, it was all about hanging out and fucking. go to the movies, and then fuck. go to the park, and then fuck. go to the gospel concert, and then fuck. escort me to christmas party for my job, and then fuck me later that night. fuck, go out and get some pizza, then come back and fuck some more. if you have a "this is all about hanging out and fucking" mindset, you don't get hurt because most people can meet those minimal and primal expectations.

i guess, i could sum it up in the words of my friend gayle. at age 35 gayle, an account supervisor at some investment firm uptown, had once tried trusting brothers only to get hurt again and again.

one afternoon, after we had sex, she laid across my chest with her head on my neck, her arm across my torso, and her legs straddling me. as i gently rubbed her ass, she told me “at age 29, i quit looking for mr. right and started looking for mr. big dick”.

i asked her “so, am i mr. big dick?”. she didn’t respond. i lifted my head up a little and looked down and saw her eyes squinting as she fought back tears.

my friend mario, who i will talk about later, once told me something similar. even though mario and i had never had sex and he knew nothing of my “double dipping”, he had been hurt very seriously by a woman he felt he loved. for several years after, mario referred to black women exclusively as “black bitches”. when the pain subsided enough to the point where he could talk about black women without using the word “bitch” in the same sentence, he told a group of us “fuck finding a black nubian queen, just give me a round ass, a tight pussy, and caller id and i can work out the rest”.

well, this particular afternoon, i was sitting in front of my computer wearing a pair of white boxer briefs and nothing else. after scratching my balls, i pressed the power button on my computer and watched it light up. it was a nice compact computer with a transparent case. you could see all the circuits and electronic shit inside. i had gotten it as an “open box bargain” at one of the electronic stores in town.

to be totally honest, these days i mainly used it to hunt down pussy or ass from the online singles forums and chat services. i had discovered the internet to be rife with men and women who subscribed to the “hanging out and fucking” concept of relationships. to be even more specific, i found the kansas city black community to be seething with easy sex from other black folks like myself.

of course, only a handful of sisters and brothers came at you with the “pussy first” or “ass first” dialogue. even on the internet, with it’s anonymity and reputation for uninhibited chat, people still seemed to practice some sort of discretion. on their profiles, people used generic code terms to explain what they were looking for. “looking for casual dating” meant “let’s meet, if i like you – i’ll fuck you, but don’t get pissed if i don’t call you back”. “looking for serious dating” meant “if the dick or the pussy is good, i may want to fuck you again and again for awhile”. “looking for friends” meant “i like to spread my pussy around – wanna taste?”. “i have children, may want to have more later” meant “bybc - bring your own birth control”.

i hadn’t checked my email in a few days, so i had about thirty messages waiting for me. trying to practice e-mail etiquette, i answered all the mails, even if only with a one or two sentence response. it was always good to keep the lines of communication open, even if the sex was less than stellar. you never knew what it might lead to. i had discovered that sisters knew sisters who knew sisters and if you were patient enough, you were likely to meet one along the way who knew how to give it to you the way you liked it.

in all honesty, i didn’t really feel like typing a response to each e-mail but i like to respond to everyone. so, i started a little word processing program i had and typed “i want to talk about this – call me”. then i clicked on copy so that i could paste it as a response to each e-mail. i

knew it was kind of cold and shit, but at least everyone got a response that they felt was directed to them without me spending an hour or two typing responses to their mails.

it also gave me some time to do what i really wanted to do - find easy sex on the internet.

i began at the bottom with the oldest messages and started working my way up. i scanned each message so that if they called soon, i would could fake like i was waiting on their call. then, i clicked on "respond", pasted the text, clicked on "send", and went on to the next message.

from : cheri

to : rayman

rayman, where are you? i called your phone and left messages.

cheri

i'm not sure about this one. i think she's starting to catch feelings. i can't put a finger on it, but i think this sister is trying to fall in love or some shit like that.

from : richard

to : rayman

yo, ray. there's a three on three basketball tournament at church next weekend. wanna play? the entrance fee is \$75.00 per team and there is a \$500 prize for the winning team. the

proceeds go to send some kids to camp or some shit like that. i can cover your entrance fee.
just let me know.

richard

this sounds good. it's for a good cause and sounds like fun. plus, richard can ball. he got a fine ass woman too. i'm sure she'll show up in one of her standard "eyes on – hands off" skimpy ass pink short sets.

from : keishall

to : rayman

mr. jackson. this is ms. simmons. call me.

keishall

uh huh. i'm gonna call you tonight!

from : terrence

to : rayman

i miss you. well, i miss that big black dick, but i guess you and the dick are a package deal.
right

terrence

naw, nigga. i don't think so. the last time your ass smelled like rotten garbage and i saw them skid marks in your briefs. nasty motherfucker. find someone else.

from : robert

to : rayman

when are we gonna fuck again?

robert

just like robert. no tact, no foreplay. just liked to have it straight and raw.

after these few messages, i got tired. it all looked like the same old shit to me. as far as i was concerned the folks that i was fucking were doing the same shit i was doing. they were just keeping communication open. in other words, i was like a big black dick on retainer. leaning back, i just stretched my arms and said “fuck it.”. i would finish the rest of the emails later on.

now, to chat. i started the chat program and entered the african american section. i liked to scour the list of open rooms before i clicked on “kansas city”. i never clicked on ones for other cities like detroit or st. louis. why? i was not about to travel for sex. i knew a lot of people did, but i just couldn’t imagine driving two or three hours or spending three or four hundred dollars for a piece of ass that may not even be any good.

in fact, i knew that most folk on the internet are straight up liars and full of bullshit. i was in a chat room one day and heard a brother complain that he met a sister from the internet and, after three months of chat, he sprung three hundred dollars for plane ticket from houston to miami. he had seen her picture and was expecting a svelte, luscious, light skinned beauty with long flowing hair. well, when he met her at the airport she was light skinned, but about three hundred pounds with a weave that was in dire need of maintenance.

according to him, she tried to claim that she had no idea that he had received that picture from her e-mail. of course, he didn't believe her and just told her to go to hell. he had to spend another two hundred dollars to purchase an unreserved return ticket on the spot.

so, i didn't trust anyone from the internet. not really. and it just wasn't worth my time to look into the chat rooms for other cities. i figured that if you portrayed yourself as a beauty queen but was, in reality, a behemoth, then i would have lost nothing if i just drove across town to meet you. but, if i had spent an entire afternoon driving to st. louis or omaha, i would be really pissed.

when looking at the chat room list. a room did catch my eye. the title was "african american sexual issues". i clicked on it and entered. noone was on the microphone talking, instead there was some music playing. but the chat itself immediately got my attention.

sonyagal : in my opinion dl brothers are destroying black people

tritinam : can anyone read my text

asslover2 : dl brothers ain't no worse than lying bitches

touchmeplez : i can read your text

righteousgalny : i can read it too

cockaholic : who he calling a bitch?

jesussaves233 : jesus can save you from the demon of fornication

mrebonyking : what in the fuck is a dl brother?

poeticone : which jesus? the white one or the black one?

flowwitdis : lol

sonyagal : dl brothers have sex with men and women

asslover2 : double dippers they screw anything

asslover2 : they undercover faggots, bruh

righteousgalny : i think a man called "asslover2" has some 'tendencies'

flowwitdis : righteous – i hear you

tritinam : what's up with niggaz and anal sex anyway?

touchmeplez : poetic, don't start with that islam shit in here

jesussaves233 : if you having sex outside marriage you are possessed

tritinam : my ass is possessed then. cause i sure like fucking

cockaholic : sonya, isn't that the same as a bisexual?

tritinam : i was married for twelve years before i got divorced.

when i got married, nigga begged for oral sex. now

them motherfuckers want anal sex too.

jesusaves233 : sodomy, just like sodom and gomorrah

sonyagal : yes, they are bisexual but they consider themselves

straight

asslover2 : i'll fuck a woman in her ass but not a man. in fact, i

prefer anal sex to pussyl sex.

jesusaves233 : repent!

cockaholic : triti – do you have anal sex?

touchmeplez : asslover – what the hell is the difference?

asslover2 : some women’s pussies are too fucking big. that’s why
the only way they can get a man off is to give him the
ass.

righteousgalny : asslover – you would not come near my ass. something
is wrong with you.

touchmeplez : an ass is an ass, male or female

mrebonyking : for real?

tritinam : fuck no! my ass is exit only

righteousgalny : geeze. that is a sick ass man

asslover2 : if black women wouldn’t have such issues with sucking
dick, they wouldn’t bring shit like this on
themselves.

righteousgalny : nigga you are crazy. i think you hate black women.

asslover2 : if you ask me, black women are designed for anal sex.

sonyagal : they will tell a woman they are straight if she asks

mrebonyking : so, are you saying they don’t consider fucking men to
be having sex?

righteousgalny : excuse my language but how in the fuck are black women designed for anal sex?

sonyagal : some don't. some just consider it to be "hanging out".

mrebonyking : that's some deep shit. men fucking men but they ain't gay. how do you know this shit?

tritnam : to me, any man who want anal sex is suspect

asslover2 : black women have bigger asses than white women and bigger lips than white women. that lets me know they were designed to suck dick and give up anal sex.

sonyagal : i work at a public health center in philadelphia. let me put it to you like this.

rogerwilco : don't pay attention to asslover2. he's just fucking with you all. no brother is that stupid.

righteousgalny : i don't think he's joking.

touchmeplez : i agree triti. them niggaz are str8 homo

asslover2 : ain't nothing wrong with anal sex if you do it right

mrebonyking : do you like your job?

sonyagal : young black women have the infections. where are they getting hiv? they ain't getting it from each other. they getting

it from men.

touchmeplez : men don't want shit running up in their asshole

tritinam : what gets me is that the same men who see an enter sign on my asshole only see an exit sign on theirs

mrebonyking : so, they fucking bisexual men. what they expect?

touchmeplez : they don't want shit up their ass. niggaz get mad when a doctor do that prostate exam and shit.

flowwitdis : if a man don't like my pussy he can go to hell

flowwitdis : i've done anal sex before and i refuse to do it again

asslover2 : my shit makes sense. a big ass is designed for a big dick.

righteousgalny : no, your shit makes you look stupid.

sonyagal : yes, i like my job. they are having sex with bisexual men who lie about their sexuality. they keep it on the "dl" or downlow.

mrebonyking : damn. so, where are all these bisexuals coming from?

tritinam : if i meet a man who want me to stick something up his ass, i know he a fag. you can't deny that shit.

jesusaves233 : john 3:16

sonyagal : some have always been bisexual. some were introduced to gay sex while in prison. you have a lot of black males going in and out of the prison system. and when a man has been in there for over a year or so, there's a good chance he had sexual contact with other men.

mrebonyking : lawd. so, how can a woman tell if a man is a dl brother?

sonyagal : usually, the only way to find out is a positive hiv test. we had one sister who had been with a man for five years. he spent two of those years in prison. after she got out, they had a baby and she found out when her baby got sick.

jesusaves233 : fornicators will not inherit the kingdom of god!

asslover2 : i think you are all just jaded and scorned.
generalizing black men like that ain't right.

touchmeplez : my roommate lets her man fuck her in the ass. by the time she 50, she gonna be wearing diapers.

mrebonyking : this shit is making me sick

flowwitdis : girl, you need to write a book or something

tritinam : that's why women just get tired of niggaz. you can't trust them.

sonyagal : it does make people sick. sometimes it kills them. i even run seminars to tell people about it

mrebonyking : so, how can sisters protect themselves?

sonyagal : 1) abstinence. which only a minuscule amount practice.

mrebonyking : i agree. niggaz act like they need pussy to survive.

sonyagal : 2) make sure the man takes a hiv test and wears condoms

asslover2 : black men don't wear condoms

jesusaves233 : homosexuality is an abomination. it is disgusting to god.

righteousgalny : asslover, please wear condoms. we don't need anymore men who think like you.

touchmeplez : you have to make a black man wear a condom. and don't turn off all the lights or a nigga will try to slip that shit off before he stick it in.

asslover2 : besides, they don't make condoms big enough for me

mrebonyking : but what if the man is still fucking other men?

touchmeplez : can you even trust a man? shit.

sonyagal : yep, that is a problem. he could get infected at any time

righteousgalny : <~ laughing at asslover and his make-believe mandingo dick

mrebonyking : do sisters have any options?

tritnam : and the men who are not gay or bi are usually whores

sonyagal : in all honesty, dl brothers make the mating process bleak for black women today. by lying about their sexuality, their selfishness puts black women in potential danger.

mrebonyking : man, that's some really hard shit

tritnam : some men can sniff out easy pussy anywhere

sonyagal : i tell sisters to watch out for men who seem to have an appetite for anal sex. a lot of men who are used to sleeping with men have a penchant for anal sex, either as a top or a bottom.

mrebonyking : someone was typing about that earlier. she was complaining that brothers today just insist on putting

their dick up a woman's ass.

sonyagal : in all honesty, i suspect that some practices that were mostly practiced by gay men have crept into the straight community. especially the black community. we have allowed prison culture to influence black culture.

mrebonyking : for real?

jesusaves233 : it's a sign of the last days!

tritinam : i don't know about that shit. that's deep.

sonyagal : some rappers in the late eighties and early nineties dressed in prison fatigues. that was there trademark. ever since then, slang and dress styles from prison have crept into black culture.

mrebonyking : i heard that sagging pants came from prison

sonyagal : i heard that too. it may be true. from what i understand, it was a sign that a man had been penetrated.

mrebonyking : i often wondered why a man would want other men to see his underwear.

sonyagal : exactly. it's prison culture. let me add something
else. a lot of brothers have women that they have sex
with but other than sex, they prefer to hang with
their male friends

touchmeplez : i agree

righteousgalny : she teaching in here

mrebonyking : true. true.

sonyagal : have you thought that maybe black men today treat
their relationships with black women like conjugal
visits? they find a spot, have sex, she goes back to
their kids and he goes back to hanging with his
friends

tritinam : sonya dropping knowledge. i gotta run. bbl

mrebonyking : damn. you deep. you must read and put shit
together a lot.

sonyagal : it's my job

mrebonyking : yep.

sonyagal : but, as i was saying, dl brothers are destroying black
people. they are no better than the people behind the

tuskegee experiment. they hide the truth and the facts
about their lives ruin the lives of black women.

mrebonyking : i agree

jesusaves233 : do you know jesus as lord and savior?

touchmeplez : no doubt on that. scandalous motherfuckers. then they
have the nerve to blame the white man for shit. it
ain't the white man giving black women aids, it's them
fucking dl niggaz.

sonyagal : their thoughtlessness and carelessness not only hurts
black women, but their children, their families, their
loved ones. when a black woman has aids, her entire
family suffers. her children grow up without a mother,
her parents have to bury a daughter, her siblings have
to face life without her. mainly because of dl
brothers.

i had enough and i logged out. i didn't even go into the kansas city room. with mixed feelings
of frustration, anger, self-disgust, and sadness, i turned off the power button on my notebook
computer and closed it.

after going to the refrigerator to get a glass of fresh water, i went and sat on my bed and just looked out my window across rooftops and into the city.

the summertime afternoon sun was creating a haze over the landscape of the city, softening the edges of the buildings and creating floating, ghostlike entities from the pigeons fluttering in the distance.

it looked outside. it looked hot, really, really hot. in fact, it looked so hot, my tongue felt as if it were getting dry. i sipped on my water, holding it in my mouth for a few refreshing moments before letting it slide down my throat.

i felt bad. usually, i just laughed at online chat and went on to something else. however, this time, i felt something different. i didn't know why. but, i just did. i thought about this as i finished my glass of water and gently laid it on the windowsill.

i mean, i rarely wore condoms and couldn't remember the last time a female or male even asked me to wear one. when i was in my early twenties, i always wore them but it seemed that after college, sisters got jobs with good insurance that covered birth control and condoms became very optional.

even with hiv and aids out there. it just appeared to me that people were convinced that it wouldn't happen to them. hiv was something that happened to gay brothers or people somewhere in africa. no one living a healthy heterosexual lifestyle got it.

that's what it seemed people thought. deep inside, that's what i felt even though my mind knew else.

"i'm one of those dl brothers.", i thought. "i'm hiding my sexuality from sisters and putting these sisters in potential danger".

inside, i felt torn. it was like my heart had that empty, dropping feeling that you have when you have just been floored with some devastating news. however, at the same time, i felt an anger rising in me, causing the inside of my mouth to get dry and my temples to throb.

“how dare those bitches say that shit.” i muttered.

they had no right to make value judgements or dictate how i relate to others. especially those women. we all know women lie about the number of men they have slept with.

as my friend mario used to tell me “when a woman tells you the number of men she has slept with, multiply that number by four to find the true number. women don’t count 1) the men they screwed when they were drunk or high, 2) the men who they just fucked on impulse and had no feelings for, 3) men they fucked during those early, ultrafreaky, college years, and 4) men who they were ashamed of claiming for whatever reason.”.

i knew mario was full of shit, but at the same time, i understood the jest of what he was saying. women love to put burdens on men, especially black women, that they cannot handle themselves. a sister has a lot of nerve expecting me to tell her every tit and tat of my sexual activities when she knew she had no intention of telling me hers.

i had been down that road before.

one time, just before sex, a sister asked me if i had slept with other women since our last encounter. laying there, in her bed, i tried to do “the right thing”. for once, i decided to be honest and answered “yes”. then i asked her the same question. there was silence followed by some pathetic explanation along of the lines of “you didn’t have to answer me if you didn’t want to and so i choose not to answer you.”. pitiful.

we still had sex, but it was more or less an obligatory fuck. she just layed there like a rug and i didn’t even try to take her to orgasm. i just got my nut, got up, packed my shit and left. that was one bitch i had no intentions of calling back. fuck her.

on the one hand, when you are out “dating around” (we know what that means), it’s like a “don’t ask, don’t tell” kind of thing. your partners don’t ask who else you are dating and you don’t ask them. like renee, it’s obvious she loved to fuck. she met me at a party and gave it up the same night. was i be right to ask who else she was sleeping or had slept with? she

asked me no questions and i asked her none. that was the basic “code” in this lifestyle. you just didn’t ask.

but, did i have an obligation to tell these women that i was screwing men too? of course, going by what i just said, there was no obligation. but, did hiv and aids create an exception clause to that “code”? did i have a requirement to disclose my homosexual activities but not my heterosexual activities? then again, a man could get hiv from a woman too. that’s how magic johnson claimed he got it. so, if hiv was the determining factor in what a person disclosed, then a brother had to tell it all.

as i continued to dwell on this, i heard a screech and breaking glass outside my window. looking out and down, i saw a fender bender on the street below. through one car’s open sunroof, i could see a woman in a miniskirt dialing a number frantically on her cellphone. she had struck the car in front of her. the driver of that car got out and was just nonchalantly examining the damage. life on city streets. sometimes, it was hell.

i returned to my inner discussion. what really is the point in telling? i asked myself this. exchanging the numbers of sexual partners was just that – exchanging numbers. i admit, i had racked up a tally well over fifty. a large portion of them had been added when i worked in atlanta for several years after graduating from college.

it was the first time i made real money and didn’t have to study at night. i could get off work, hit the clubs and jazz scenes, do whatever, get home at five in the morning, drink some coffee and still teach a helluva lesson at school the next day. i got down like that.

and, in a lifestyle like that, shit happens. i was in my early twenties, the only bill i had was rent and a car payment, my testosterone was off the chain, and i had stamina like an olympic distance runner. there were many times i had sex with sisters within an hour or two of meeting them.

i remembered meeting one sister in a jazz club, she followed me to the bathroom and i fucked her on the toilet stool. she was fine too. fine as hell. later, i found out she was a speech therapist for the school district and came to my building every other tuesday. it goes

to show you that black communities can be awfully small at times. and, it wouldn't be too long before i found out that the black professional communities can be the smallest of all.

i thought "a brother has a "history". was he obligated to tell? and, as i had said over and over, when you are into the casual dating and sex scene, only a person in major denial will believe that you are not fucking other people. in that respect, my sexual history was constantly being rewritten.

so, i asked myself "do i have an obligation to update all my sexual partners on my activities since our last encounter?". what's the point? to be honest, i wouldn't want a woman to break down to me all the times she's been laid since the last time i was up in her. i'm sure a woman wouldn't want to hear about all the other folks i had been screwing. since hiv can be contracted from a female as well as a man, there was really no reason to clarify my sexual orientation. well, it may not make sense but it seemed to as i sat on the bed watching the summer afternoon fade away.

i looked at the clock. it was five minutes after three. "now would be a good time to go to the gym." i thought. afternoons were a great time to go. the gym wasn't crowded and there was no line for the machines. at this time of day, the saunas and steamrooms weren't funky from niggaz who got all sweated up on the workout machines and then didn't shower before they relaxed in the steam. it was a great time to go.

i quit thinking about my combating thoughts over any responsibility i had to my sexual partners and changed into my workout clothes. i didn't want to think about it. but, i knew that i had to eventually confront it or that it would confront me.

as i headed towards the door, i smiled as i thought about how i really appreciated the internet and the online communication forums. behind a keyboard, screen, and mouse, i was able to stand behind a wall of anonymity and successfully conceal my identity while exploring my most tightly held secrets and desires.

as far as i could see, noone could ever, nor would ever, discover the twisted truth of the sexually confusing, convoluted, and emotionally contorted double lifestyle that i was leading. my secrets were safe as they were packaged into nice little packets of electronic bits and bytes and sent soaring anonymously across hundreds of miles of digital phone lines and coaxial cables. i was out of harm's way.

leni

*there's an entire art
to putting your tongue
in a black woman's pussy
for real
you've got to find
a way
to lick the pussy
around the pussy
inside the pussy
and under the pussy
at the same time
you've got to master the art
of holding her clitoris
with your teeth
while you fondle it
with your tongue*

you can't hold it too hard
or she'll say it hurts
you can't hold it too loose
or she'll say she don't feel it
you've got to bite a little
just a little
not enough to draw blood
but enough to send a tinge
of pain
they like that
when it hurts so good
if you really
want to send her someplace
put an ice cube in your mouth
or a peppermint
before you do it
hell
sometimes
i put a few cubes

and a few mints

in my mouth

before i work a sister's pussy

in a way

i think a sister's pussy

is like

the sister herself

it takes some pain

and some shock

for her to feel some pleasure

and get some release

leni was a female friend of mine who worked as an assistant prosecutor for jackson county. she also sat with robert on the advisory board of a local health center. in fact, it was robert who introduced me to her at a community fair that his employer had sponsored some months before.

leni had a very nice apartment. like me, she was a minimalist and liked things simple and uncomplicated. leni had a loft too, with the same hardwood floors, brick walls, and exposed ceiling that mine had. leni's apartment had a nicer view, however. while my loft looked onto the north end of kansas city, hers looked south, past crown center and on towards the plaza.

i dropped in on leni from time to time. she had one of those visitor intercom systems too. you had to dial her number from a keypad in the lobby and she would buzz you in. leni turned her intercom off when she had men over. i think she felt that visitors in the lobby actually believed she wasn't home when she failed to respond.

however, leni parked on the street in front of the building. her burgundy suv with a pink and green sorority sticker stood out like a sore thumb. if the suv was out there, leni was there, even if she weren't answering the intercom. i knew that for a fact.

i was introduced to leni about eight months ago. she was doing volunteer work in a booth sponsored by robert's employer that was attempting to raise awareness about the issue of mental illness in the urban black community. after we were properly introduced, we exchanged phone numbers and emails and had stayed in touch since then.

i was glad i met her. leni was an athletic dark skinned sister with short, tightly curled black hair and a thick, curvy body. leni was kind of tall, like a model. in fact, when wearing a full length dashiki, leni looked like she could be some kind of ethiopian queen or nigerian royalty.

leni's skin was like sweet, dark chocolate. with the exception of a pencil thin two inch scar on the side of her face, her skin was perfect. her short afro was nearly perfect too, it was tightly curled, sharply lined, and perfectly shaped. a gym rat in her spare time, leni's body was like that of a professional sprinter, lean but dense. leni had thick rounded thighs, teardrop shaped buttocks, and perky, petite breasts that rose proudly like two small mountains molded black stone.

leni appeared that she could breezily pass the 'pencil test'. as leni explained to me, the "pencil test" takes place when a woman puts a pencil under her breast. if the pencil rolls down, you're straight. but if her breasts sag down and hold the pencil in place, she failed.

leni's features had a lot of african in them with a set of sharp protruding lips, an equally sharp nose, and deep set shiny brown eyes. her features appeared as if they had been carved from a quarry of freshly cast bronze by some tribal craftsman.

i must admit, i was visually entrenched by leni's face. to me, it had a type of deep congo black female sexy ruggedness. she looked like a sister who could take on a raging gorilla single handedly but still represent like a true queen. i found that to be incredibly sexy.

if i considered any woman to be a keeper, it would have been leni. however, at this point in life, i wasn't sure if i really wanted a woman. so, keeping a woman was really an irrelevant concept and not worth spending too much brainpower on.

leni had a high sex drive and didn't mind trying to satisfy it. she enjoyed lengthy sessions of passionate intimacy on a very regular and deeply intense basis, even when i was not around. so, when she wasn't answering her intercom but her vehicle was parked outside, i knew what was going down.

it was cool with me, however. i wasn't leni's only partner and she wasn't mine.

today, it was a lazy sunday afternoon in late july. it had been raining most of today followed by a stifling, sticky humidity.

i attended church that morning, like i normally did, went with some friends to dinner and then dropped in on leni. she had no visitors and so she let me in. after exchanging the typical formalities, i pounded her hard on the bare floor in her living room. it was good but left my knees sore.

now, we were laying here nude on an imported, thick, asian rug catching our breath. a gentle breeze from the central air blew across the room and then turned down and descended gently on our still-sweaty bodies. some slow classical piano music playing in leni's bedroom wisped through the cool air and rolled tenderly across our ears.

"how was it?", leni asked quietly as she rolled over on her stomach and rested her arm across my chest.

"good." i responded "its always good."

"where you been?" she inquired.

i hadn't talked to leni in about four days.

"i've been around. enjoying the summer."

"haven't heard from you." leni mentioned.

"you haven't had your phone on." i responded, remembering that i called on my way home from robert's a few days ago. leni hadn't answered.

"my answering machine hasn't been working." she rationalized.

it was another one of leni's lame excuses. she was turning the machine off so she wouldn't get interrupted during sex.

"you make good money, buy another one."

"i need to do that." she replied.

"i would concur with that."

"concur? you trying to sound all official?" leni laughed.

"yeah..concur..that's my word for the week." i chuckled back.

"how's robert?" she asked.

"you probably see him more than i do."

"our board hasn't met in a while." she explained

"well, i guess he's doing fine."

"how was church?"

"good."

"what they talk about?"

"turning the other cheek." i answered plaintively.

actually, i had no idea what they were talking about in church, i spent most of the worship hour on the front steps trying to get a younger sister who worked in the children's sunday school. her unlisted phone number was what i wanted. after a lengthy conversation on her budding secretarial career, she finally gave it up. but, it took me until the sermon was over to get it.

"yep, turning the other cheek." i repeated.

"like this?", leni turned on her side and raised up her butt in my face. i bit it.

"ouch!" she yelped with a smile on her face. she liked it.

"you know you liked that." i told her.

“uh huh...did you leave a bruise?” leni asked as she navigated her body so that her butt was in my face.

“why? don't want your man to see it?” i asked.

leni just laughed. i felt she just needed to come clean. she was sleeping with other brothers. it's no big deal.

“so, when you gonna settle down?”

“when i meet ms. right.”

“who is ms. right?”

“the opposite of ms. wrong!”

“smartass! you know what i mean.” leni laughed.

“honestly. i don't know, i'm just not looking.” i responded flatly.

“so leni, when are you going to settle down?”

leni just giggled. she was very evasive on that topic.

i knew leni had lived with a man who sold copying machines for about three years. from what i remember, it ended when he claimed he needed space and asked her to stay with her friends for a few days. unsuspecting, leni actually packed a bag and went over a girlfriend's house.

late that night she came back that night to talk to him about it and caught him having sex with one of her sorority sisters. to make it worse, they were doing it on the king sized waterbed that leni was making payments on. she was crushed and swore to never get hurt again. maybe that was why leni was into multiple partners.

what her ex did was foul, even by my standards. actually, it's weird, considering the things that i was doing, to consider someone else's behavior as foul. maybe it was because i actually like leni. to me, she was incredibly laid back, cool, and funny.

without a word, leni abruptly stood up and tiptoed into her kitchen. after a few brief moments, she emerged with a tall glass of crushed ice cubes and shining tin of very potent peppermint breath lozenges.

she laid on her side, next to me, facing me, kissed me, and just smiled. i knew what leni wanted. we'd done this many, many times. she didn't have to say a word.

i reached over her and into the glass and grabbed an ice cube. putting it in my mouth, i followed it with a few of the lozenges. it was cool in my mouth and began to deaden the sides. i didn't pay any attention to that, my attention was on satisfying leni.

laying leni on her back, i began at her neck, licking and sucking it enthusiastically. the ice cubes and lozenges would quickly melt, and so i would have to replace them about every three minutes.

i sucked and licked leni's neck, then up to her ears, and back down to the front of her throat. as i reached her mouth, i deeply tongue kissed her and slowly inserted my dick into her. after using my tongue to transfer the half melted ice cubes and peppermint lozenges from my mouth to her, i quickly grabbed another one and continued.

arching my back so that i my face could reach her chest, i proceeded to tantillize leni's breasts. i spent a great deal of time sucking her nipples. she liked for me to slowly bite her breasts and so i did. after biting, i sucked them so hard that i could actually see bruises appearing through her dark skin. leni liked that.

sliding my dick out of her, i moved my entire body down, only stopping to grab more ice cubes and lozenges. i sluggishly slid my frozen mouth over leni's tight abdomen and her sides. the entire time, i was steadily moving my face down to the place where leni wanted me the most.

when i reached leni's pussy, i grabbed two ice cubes and several lozenges and placed them in my mouth. after placing her legs over my shoulder, i rested my mouth on her shaved mound and worked down to her open, wet vulva.

tenderly gripping her clitoris between my teeth, i used my tongue to lick it vivaciously. as the ice cubes and lozenges melted, they mixed with warm fluids coming from her pussy, filled my mouth, and ran down my chin. it was incredibly nasty, but incredibly good.

i opened my bite, releasing leni's clitoris from between my teeth and inserted my tongue deep into her pussy. her pussy was hot, wet, and the lips were enlarged and throbbing. as i pressed my face into her pussy, i could feel the dripping wet lips pulsating against the sides of my mouth.

as leni got more and more excited, i could feel her body tighten up and her breathing become more intense, deeper, and rhythmic. moaning louder and louder, she crossed her legs across my back and reached down, firmly gripped my wrists, and pulled my arms up until my hands were resting near her breasts. leni then reached down and held my hands tightly, interlocking her fingers with mine.

i continued to fuck her with my tongue and leni's back arched sharply so that it was almost raised her shoulders off the floor. leni began to shake and moan so loudly that i knew she was nearly to orgasm.

however, leni was not ready to cum yet. she restrained herself and started breathing shallowly and lowered her back to the floor again. leni then let go of my hands and gently pushed my head up and away from her pussy. i could feel a flood of melted ice, peppermint, and pussyl fluids run down from mouth and drip off of my chin.

i looked at leni. her eyes were closed and she was gritting her teeth. for a moment, i thought something was wrong.

but, leni was simply ready for intercourse. she pulled my body up so that my dick slithered into her and her head was resting under my chin. leni gingerly wrapped her chocolate arms around my neck and shoulders, her thick legs around my hard butt, and began sucking fiercely on my neck. she also began to bite me, considerably harder than i bit her. it was a bit uncomfortable, but i didn't complain. i liked for leni to feel good and this made her feel good.

leni was limber and athletic. she was able to ripple her entire body during sex from her neck down to her legs. it made her body feel like one giant wave and it even made her pussy feel tighter than it already felt.

after feeling leni's rhythm, i began to move my body in unison so that our pelvises met together in passionate synchronicity.

for about thirty minutes, we made slow love, our bodies moving in perfect unison and tempo. it was like we had become one organism and our genitals had become one pulsating heart.

as we moved towards climax, i thought for a minute about whether i could spend the rest of my life with this woman. at times like this, i felt that i could abandon all else and be with leni. other than the fact that both of us had other lovers, we got along perfectly. maybe this was worth forsaking all others.

we came to orgasm together, slowly, and gently. there was no loud yelling or shouting, just a moment in which our bodies were tensed and our hearts seemed to stop beating. i think leni was primed from orgasm from the time i had went down on her, but she purposely held it back so that i could enjoy cumming with her.

afterwards, we laid there for a long time. my dick, now flaccid, was still inside her. leni's legs were now relaxed and laying open. her arms were now laying gently across my back. we didn't say a word. leni and i just enjoyed the moist warmth of each other's bodies.

for a moment, i thought about leni and myself laying here. this was not consistent with the casual sex i was having with others. in those situations, we would pretty much break off

physical contact after sex, sliding away from each other. there was no intimacy there, just physical gratification.

but, with leni, it was different.

baldwin's

after leaving leni's, i stopped by a little club near twenty seventh and prospect called "baldwins". it was owned by a good natured but ambitious brother named melvin who owned a pharmacy and barber shop that he had inherited from his retired father. melvin was also a member of some black, empowerment based, investment club that robert headed. in fact, it was robert who had introduced me to melvin and baldwin's.

baldwin's was an underground club, figuratively speaking. according to the city, it didn't exist. it was housed in an old, three story victorian house on a block in an area of town that was once populated by kansas city's cultural elite.

in the forties and early fifties, this area of town was vibrant, affluent, and bustling. story had it that this area was once filled with rich jewish people who fled to the suburbs as blacks moved in. now, due to gentrification and urban blight, this area had become run down and was rife with rat infested, vacant lots and boarded over, abandoned houses.

unlike the other houses on the block, baldwin's was in pristine condition with immaculate brick red walls, hunter green trim around the windows and doors, satin black guttering, and a relatively new dark crimson roof. baldwin's had a large, wrapping front porch with peppered with cream painted recliners and porch swings that were chained down so they wouldn't be stolen. sometimes, when the interior was full, brothers would sit on this front porch and enjoy good liquor, smokes, and conversation in the night air.

the lush, green, frontyard was neatly cut and lined off with chest high thick shrubs that were manicured so sharply that the tops and sides looked nearly like perfect flat plane surfaces.

like other victorian homes, baldwin's had very large front and back doors with thick, translucent, beveled glass. they were very elegant and spoke of a time past when these homes housed parties and socials for kansas city's highest society.

all the exterior windows of baldwin's were very large and encased in black security bars. through these bars and the glass windows themselves, you could see the velvet beige drapes that melvin used in every room.

to me, a house this elegant was something you would expect to see in an affluent, suburban cul-de-sac, not in a deteriorating urban community. however, melvin was street smart. by nuzzling it deep into the decomposing municipal corridor of kansas city, he could operate it without drawing much attention to himself.

even though there was no cover charge to enter baldwin's, there was a password to get into this first floor. the password was "blues for mister charlie". that was the name of a play james baldwin had written in nineteen sixty four.

when you approached the door, the attendant would simply ask you, "'the amen corner'?". this was the title of another james baldwin literary production. if you responded with the password, you would be allowed to enter. if you failed, you would be quickly and clearly redirected in another direction because melvin was serious about making sure baldwin's ran the way he wanted. and melvin wanted baldwin's to operate without drama and problems.

melvin had refurbished this house so that it appealed to an upscale, discreet clientele. he had spent a lot of time and effort creating a spot where brothers who had taste, desire, and a need for privacy would go.

the house was nearly a century old, and the two large rooms that constituted the first floor were divided by a big square doorway with imbedded dividing doors that melvin could pull out if he wanted to shut off one room from the other. from what i understood, these were popular at the time this house was built. back then, the front room would be a parlor and visitors would wait there while dinner was prepared behind the dividing doors.

the walls on the first floor had been redone with a dark, sophisticated scheme. the lower half of the walls consisted of a thick, dark, walnut paneling. the upper half was painted a deep, resonating, blood red. satin beige molding that matched the drapes ran horizontally along the middle of the walls, separating the paneled bottom from the painted top.

the walls were eloquently decorated with old, soft black and white pictures set in ornate gold and brass frames. these pictures were of famous african american males, some who arguably shared the same sexual tastes as the men who socialized here. james baldwin, ralph ellison, george washington carver, paul robeson and others were immortalized here. these very walls were a virtual celebration of african american masculinity.

once inside, you were likely to see a group of thirty and above black men gathered in the front room, sitting on the plush, hunter green armchairs enjoying fine liquors and smokes.

they were liable to be engaged in deep and provocative discussions on any number of disciplines: music, art, finance, politics, literature, or religion.

there may be no conversation going on and the men may simply be listening to some john coltrane or charlie parker being piped gently through thousand dollar speakers that had been implanted out of sight into the dark woodgrained walls.

an attendant was nearby and if you wanted a drink, you simply had to tell him what you wanted. there was no charge for drinks at all, the membership covered that. even though you could drink as much as you wanted, i never saw or heard of anyone getting inebriated or acting in an unacceptable fashion.

the second large room on the first floor had a pool table in the center with an elegant bronze and glass chandelier affixed over it. around the perimeter of the room were more of the dark green, velvety high back chairs that were in the first room. while brothers would play pool for neither pride nor money, others would leisurely recline in the plush chairs and sofas observing, conversating, and possibly meditating.

the crowd was relaxed and mature. noone was in a rush to be next at the pool table. noone fought or argued over meaningless games here. it was brotherhood. pure and simple.

once a month, melvin would take down the pool table, line all the chairs and sofas up to face one direction, and moderate a literature reading. it was open to members to read anything they wished, whether they wrote it themselves or someone else did. some brought classic black literature, others brought contemporary black literature. some brought their personal journals and diaries.

once i was there when a brother tearfully read off several e-mails from his job chronicalling to us the downsizing of his employer, elimination of his division, and his journey from fourteen year employee to unemployed.

the readings were sweet gatherings and allowed us to express sides of ourselves that black men generally are assumed not to have. in a company of those who accepted and understood us, we could reach inside the very core our beings and, through literature, tell others of our struggles, victories, inner pain, and inner joys. i never missed a reading at baldwin's.

on the left side of the front room was a narrow staircase with a cream white rail that ascended up and turned right onto the second floor. while the first floor was about socialization, the second floor was clearly about intimate encounters.

the second floor contained five good sized bedrooms and a large single restroom. unlike the first floor, which had shiny maple oak floors, the second floor and the one above it were carpeted with plush deep red carpeting. as a result, there was very little sound on the second floor, from the first floor or outside.

each of the bedrooms on the second floor had been painted in blood red complemented with a cream colored shiny trim on the crown moldings. all doors on the second floor were still in their original dark mahogany state and had been sanded and shined to a dignified brilliance.

a watchman stood at the base of the steps on the first floor, standing next to him was a rack of chrome keys hanging from brass hooks. there was a hook for each available room on the second floor.

if the hooks were empty, that meant all the keys were out and there were no rooms available. if there were rooms available, your partner or yourself would hand the watchman a hundred dollar bill and he would hand you the key.

a couple had one hour to do what you wished and then come back down and return the key. if there was no one waiting, you could give him a second hundred and have another hour. upon completion, the attendant would himself change the sheets and freshen the room up for the next couple.

each of the bedrooms on the second floor was equipped with a mahogany four post queen size canopied bed covered with black satin sheets. alongside each bed sat a matching mahogany nightstand containing condoms, lubricant, massage oils, flavored jellies, dildos, and other toys. as a house rule, members were not allowed to bring their own accessories.

the bathroom on the second floor had been redesigned to hold small three standing showers. this was the place to clean up and get freshened before you left. soap, powder, and even deodorant samples were provided.

outside the bathroom, on a table stand was a stack of fresh, clean, white egyptian cotton bath towels and handtowels. if you needed a towel, you were welcome to it, and when you were done, you simply placed it into the laundry hatch next to the bathroom door and it would slide down the metal chute onto the basement floor.

another set of steps led from the second the third floor. while the first floor was for group socialization and the second floor was for sexual encounters, the third floor was kind of a combination of floors one and two. it was designed for group sexual encounters.

the third floor was a giant open space with no dividing walls. the main walls had been covered over with that same dark walnut paneling that was used on the first floor and it was carpeted with the same plush, red carpeting that was used on the second floor.

this upper space had four king sized beds that melvin had somehow attached to each other so that they created one huge bed. melvin had also managed to obtain a customized set of large, red satin sheets that he used to cover this monstrosity. he added about red satin comforters and about fifteen goose down pillows in red satin cases to complete the setting.

this large room had it's own premium sound and lighting system. the lighting system could be adjusted for dim lighting, colored lighting, disco lighting, and even black lighting for those who chose to use neon paints.

at one end of this large room was a large burgundy red refrigerator stocked with bottles of wine, beer, vodka, brandy and some other frozen drinks that melvin's bartender had prepared.

next to it, was a large antique mahogany chest loaded with a stockpile of toys, lubricants, videos, condoms, and magazines. they were all neatly arranged for easy access.

once, robert and i were talking about the contents of this chest and robert laughed heartily that "melvin must have a *corporate* account at the local sex store.". i agreed.

at the other end of the room was a large, brass, wire rack holding dozens of votive candles that were all in short, red, glass holders. it was the same kind of rack that you would see illuminating the paintings of some byzantine haloed saints in a catholic church.

sometimes, people would turn out all the lights on this third floor, ignite these candles, and then enjoy themselves as the candlelight danced around the room, and across the sweaty, oily, and convoluted mass of their amalgamated bodies.

the third floor was only for those with deep desires and even deeper pockets. it took an even one thousand dollars, per person, to spend the entire night on this floor. that was well beyond

my means and, even though melvin had showed me this floor during a tour, i had never been back.

despite the hefty cost, there was usually four or five brothers on the third floor everytime when i went to baldwin's. sometimes, it was ten or twelve.

you see, a lot of brothers with deep pockets frequented baldwin's. it wasn't uncommon to see local professional athletes, visiting entertainers, and community dignitaries on the first floor sipping a drink or descending from the second floor or third floor after a tryst.

in fact, i remember one discussion i sat in on where they were saying that the night before, there had been twenty, six-figure-income brothers on the top floor celebrating a bachelor party for another getting married the next day. i was stuck on the words "*twenty brothers*". that meant that melvin made at least twenty thousand dollars in one night.

as you would expect, the crowd was all older, professional, and discreet black brothers. there were no flamers, homothugs, confused negroes, queens, exhibitionists, cross dressers, or faghags welcomed in here.

actually, most patronizers were securely married with children. they were very discreet about this chapter in their lives and so baldwin's met their needs.

melvin had no official dress code but noone ever wore jeans or tennis shoes here. it was always slacks, dress shoes, and some kind of formal or semi-formal top. many of the brothers here wore tweed or wool jackets when they came here.

a lot of networking went on here, professionally and otherwise. cards were freely exchanged, introductions were made, and referrals were liberally given.

it was not uncommon to see two opposing attorneys in a local court case openly discussing how they planned to confront each other the next day in court and make predictions as to how the judge would rule.

once, i saw two older, grey haired pastors discussing their grandchildren while exchanging bulging black binders containing decades of collected sermon notes.

in baldwin's, the lights were always kept dim and soft on the eyes while the air was ripe with the seductive aromas of fine liquor, turkish cigars, and lush french colognes. even if you went there for the ambiance and the discussion alone, baldwin's was well worth it.

robert had turned me on to baldwins. he was a charter member here and had actually helped melvin secure private investing to create this oasis. what robert actually did was to assemble some friends who would be interested in a place like baldwin's. altogether, they loaned melvin over one hundred thousand dollars on the condition that melvin pay them back, with twenty percent interest, within five years.

from what robert had shared with me one afternoon in bed, melvin was able to pay back all investors, with liberal interest, within a year of opening the doors of baldwin's.

this was true underground free enterprise. everyone got what they wanted and all came out with more than they started.

if melvin had even remotely attempted to do this "legally" he would have drowned in a sea of permits, codes, licenses, and beauracratc red tape. i didn't fault melvin for doing it the way he did. i would have done it the same way.

despite the fact that it was obvious what the clientele of baldwin's liked, the "code" was used religiously in here.

the code was a silent, gesture-based, communication system that brothers, like myself, used to correspond with each in public. it was discrete, slick and unmistakable.

if i was curious about a brother that i had met in the grocery store, gym, club, or church, i could use the code to find out whether or not we could connect.

there was a signal we used to first find out if a brother understood that lingo, and was therefore involved in the lifestyle. after that, there were more signals to see if a brother was available and willing.

to see if a brother understood the lingo, i would rub my chin with the forefinger and thumb on my right hand, followed by using the same right hand to brush back the hair (if i had any) on the right side of my head. next, i would scratch the left side of my neck with the same right forefinger, and then clearing my throat twice.

if a brother responded with the same exact body language, a connection was made.

if someone didn't respond with the same exact language, either they didn't understand the lingo or simply didn't wish to communicate with you. it was simple, slick and discreet just like the brothers who met at baldwin's.

it may seem complicated but using these four actions guaranteed that no mistakes and misinterpretations would be made. the respondent clearly understood that you were a discreet brother who liked other brothers and he was replying as such. i had used these signals over the years with no problems and many good results.

once a connection had been made, scratching the left chin with the index and middle fingers of the right hand meant you were with someone, involved, or otherwise not available. scratching the same left chin with the index finger alone meant you were available or willing to be available.

once this had been established, there was nothing secretive about the rest. if you wanted the person to leave the room with you, you may nod towards the door. if you wanted them to have your phone number, you may simply reach in your wallet, get out a business card and hand it to them. it went as smoothly as you wanted it to.

in baldwin's the code was used faithfully. it wasn't uncommon to note two brothers introducing themselves to each other using the "code", one nod towards the stairs, and then the two leave for the upstairs.

however, not everyone in baldwin's was looking for sex. this is what made this spot so incredibly cool and special to me. if you just wanted to hang out, have intelligent chat, or play a few relaxing rounds of pool, you could go to baldwin's and just relax on the first floor. in baldwin's, there were no expectations, no assumptions, and no drama.

after leaving leni's, i had stopped home, showered, put on some black slacks and a light blue top and came on over to baldwin's. after ordering a scotch and tea on the rocks, i nuzzled down in one of the plush chairs and listened in on an interesting conversation about the music of john coltrane and whether his best work was before "love supreme" or after.

one of the main speakers was a music professor at a local university. another operated a jazz club downtown. they both knew coltrane in and out, and it showed.

"rayman", a soft voice came from my left. i turned.

it was dr. richardson. he was a professor of music theory at a local university.

i hadn't seen dr. richardson in a while. the last time i had seen him, he was telling me that his wife, also a college professor, was expecting their third child within the next few weeks. that was couple of months ago and a few moments before he went upstairs with a musclebound brother who had recently retired from professional sports and relocated to kansas city.

"a girl". dr. richardson said with a wide toothy smile. "her name is symphony." he passed me a wallet sized picture of a beige newborn baby girl in a pink frilly outfit

his daughter was a beautiful baby girl and the richardsons had given her a beautiful name. i was happy for dr. richardson.

for a minute, i wondered if i would be able to enjoy the blessing of having children in my life. if i did, i wouldn't want them to go through the shit i was going through these days. but, that was up to me. i had to get my shit together way before then.

unlike me, dr. richardson really had his act together. about forty five years old, short and nearly bald, he was a very intelligent, polite, soft spoken, and dignified man.

i don't know if dr. richardson was wealthy or not, but he seemed to have an unassuming confidence about him that i often noted in the disposition of rich people. i always assumed it was because they didn't have the financial burdens and concerns all the rest of us had.

you could tell that dr. richardson may have been a dapper ladies man in college. he had nice soft round face with brown/auburn skin, and a thick, finely lined goatee. his nose and lips were sharp as if he had some white somewhere in his ancestry.

leaning back with a half full glass of what appeared to be a glass of dry gin on the rocks in his hand, dr. richardson wore a nice pair of tropical wool, tan, khaki slacks with a long, hanging, off-white, dashiki-type shirt. on his feet were some square ended, patterned black shoes that looked like they could be snakeskin. as usual, dr. richardson was nattily dressed and fit in well. his appearance spoke of confidence, authority, and intellectualism.

sitting there with his wedding band, there was nothing to indicate this man was into other brothers. then again, that was standard here at baldwin's. most brothers here were proudly married with children, wearing their wedding bands shamelessly, even when preparing to have sex with other men.

in fact, one, somewhat freaky brother from here was notorious for asking his partners to lick his wedding band. that was deep, even to me.

"so, you shutting down the factory after this one?" i laughed.

"oh yes, the mrs has long told me that three is enough." dr. richardson replied with a chuckle.

"ahhh, she calls the shots." i added.

“you got the keep the missus happy, you know. if mama ain’t happy, then nobody’s happy.”
dr. richardson replied before sipping some more of his gin.

“true. true.”

“so, how’s summer.” he asked.

“fine. it’s going good.”

“that’s good. we need more black males in education. role models for our young black men.”
dr. richardson added.

i could tell he was about to get on a soapbox.

“i hear that a lot....” i replied as i waited for the sermon to begin.

“but?” he asked, looking my eyes as if to anticipate my next statement..

“i just think that sometimes they put too much on us. people expect us to do what fathers should be and are not doing.” i replied, shaking my head slowly.

“i fully agree there, rayman. but, for some of these young brothers, the only positive black males they will ever have significant contact with will be their teachers.”

“and you are very true on that.”

“let me ask you a question.”

“sure.”

“as a people, where do you think we are going?”

“hmmmm, that’s a good one.”

“i ask that of students in my classes sometimes. i think that the progression of african american music reflects the progression of our culture and where it is headed.”

"i can see that."

"and what i see is not good. it's gonna take brothers like yourself and myself to influence these young brothers so that we don't go extinct."

"true. i do what i can."

"rayman, i'm sorry if i feel like i'm on a soapbox. it's just that when i was driving down her i saw a bunch of young brothers on prospect with their pants all sagging, looking like young thugs. and one of them was holding a baby." dr. richardson said with a tinge of etiquette apologeticism mixed with unapologetic moral justification in his voice.

"wow." i replied. i saw that scene nearly every day.

"yeah. it made me mad. cause, based on what i saw, that baby was being taught that this thuggish, street corner mentality was the way things were supposed to be." he continued.

"i would think that too." i added.

"so, man, i'm sorry. i know you didn't come here to hear all that."

"it's alright, dr. richardson. it's all good. we hear to chat and talk about what's on our minds."

"yeah, brother, i just felt i was burdening you with my frustrations. you know."

"i feel you."

i felt my cellphone suddenly vibrate in deep my pocket. as usual, i let it vibrate four times and then, after a short pause, it vibrated one more time. whoever called me had left a text message. after fishing it out from my pocket, i checked the message. it was from renee.

"can you come over?" was the simple message she left.

renee wanted more. then again, i wasn't surprised. it was good.

i must have been smiling. cause when i looked back over at dr. richardson, he just lifted his eyebrows and nodded approvingly.

"got a date?" he asked.

"looks like it."

"my brother, you are young and unattached. it's time to enjoy it all, brother. cause once you get married..." dr. richardson replied with smirk of mischevious envy.

a tall, dark, clean shaven african looking brother came in and stood next to dr.richardson's chair, resting his hand gently on dr. richardson's shoulder. he was very thin and dressed in a white suit with a black open collar shirt.

like dr. richardson, he wore a white platinum wedding band.

"looks like my date just arrived." dr. richardson said with a grin as he rose from his chair.

"looks good." i replied as i nodded my head in approval.

"see you next time, brother." dr. richardson said as he shook my hand.

then, he and his tall, dark friend made their way over to the man at the staircase. dr. richardson's friend handed the attendant a crisp one hundred dollar bill and accepted the key for a room upstairs. he and dr. richardson then, arm in arm, vanished up the staircase.

renee had given me her card with her address written on the back. she must have been planning on inviting me over. i got the card from my wallet and looked at it. i notice that she lived in independence. there were some nice homes out there and i was guessing that she had was buying one. she seemed to have that kind of style.

for a moment, i paused. the questions that had been simmering in my mind and brought to a boil with my internet chat were still marinating in my consciousness. if i go back to renee's, did i have an obligation to disclose to her my other partners and activities? she wouldn't ask.

of course she wouldn't. she wouldn't have a reason to. i hadn't given her a reason. in fact, i hadn't given leni a reason either.

as i gazed around baldwins, i thought about the other men who were gathered here. i doubted that any of them were ever questioned about their sexuality. they were all so masculine and dignified in their appearance and mannerisms. most of them were securely married and i'm sure that in spouses wildest dreams their spouses had no idea whatsoever of their activities here at baldwins. i knew that if i were married to one of them, i wouldn't have any idea. in fact, if i met any of these men on the street, i would have no idea that they were into sexing other men. for some odd reason, that thought momentarily troubled me.

what did that make me? this question was in my mind and as hard as i tried to push it away from the forefront of my consciousness, i knew that it would never, ever leave. until i came to some kind of moral and emotional resolution, that question would continue to disturb me.

i wanted to do the respectable thing with my life, the upright thing. i didn't want to be another fake, fraud, or phony brother who brings despondency and grief to already overburdened sister. i really didn't want to deliberately cause pain to someone. i just couldn't live like that or with the knowledge that.

so, even as i slowly finished off my beverage and prepared to leave, i knew that the questions that were ripening in my soul would soon undeniably come to fruition into my life, projecting me over the very precipice and into of the valley of decision. it was formidably coming, i knew it.

for a brief moment, leni again crossed my mind. i really wanted to tell her some of these things. i felt she may understand. then again, i didn't to tell her. she may not understand at all.

but, tonight, i was going to get with renee. it was summertime. i had another six weeks off from work, and there was no hurry to confront any questions about my character and identity. plus, i was very horny.

raynall

leni once told me that she once saw a video of two dark skinned, muscular, well hung, black men taking a shower together and washing each other's bodies. she said that it was incredibly erotic to her. she asked me how i felt and i pretended like i was sort of disgusted by it all. i knew that was the expected response and so i just delivered it. i'm glad we were laying there naked when she asked me because the thought of it made my dick become stiff really fast.

when we had sex a few minutes later, i thought about my friend raynall.

raynall was a married assistant pastor and bicyclist. a dedicated athlete, he had carved his entire body into a sinewy mass of firm black muscle. raynall had a pair of solid bicyclist legs capped with thick curved thighs of black concrete. his legs were so solid and developed that raynall could effortlessly squat over five hundred pounds. even raynall's shapely calves were thickly muscled. his tight hamstrings give the impression as if someone had cut thick wedges of hard wood and slid them under his dark, black skin.

with hardly any flab on his body, raynall had a very small, almost feminine, waist which smoothly triangulated out into a wide set of broad, manly shoulders. these shoulders filled out his pinstriped, european-cut suits quite eloquently.

raynall's stomach was perfectly flat and his abdominal muscles were engraved deeply into it. raynall's perfect abdomen looked as if someone had taken a hammer and chisel and precisely carved it from a block of ebony granite.

raynall could also bench press over three hundred pounds and he bicycled thousands of miles a year. as a result, his chest was immaculately cut like two stylish blocks of black

marble. even raynall's nipples looked muscular. they were dark, perky, and round. like the rest of his body, they were pieces of art.

i liked to taste raynall's body. he often used a sweet skin oil that he purchased while competing in a bicycle race in europe. with a tinge of coconut, vanilla, and strawberry, it tasted as good on my tongue as it smelled on his body. when raynall was wearing this lotion, i just cherished the opportunity to slowly but surely sweep my tongue across his chest and watch his wide back arc as he moaned deeply in ecstasy.

as one would expect, raynall's arms were as muscular and defined as his legs, chest, and shoulders. raynall's triceps had that perfect horseshoe shape and when he flexed his biceps they swelled up as if someone had inserted spheres of marble into his flesh. raynall's forearms were also just as sinewy and muscular as the rest of his body. raynall's grip was so strong that he could literally squeeze the juice from a ripe orange.

raynall's face was thick and rugged, with the serration of features that one would expect to in a native of west africa. it had a erudite primordial beauty that was almost beyond description. his full pink lips and wide broad nose had a forbidden mandingo flair to them while his wide, large eyes spoke of an inviting innocence an inner purity.

with his entire body dipped in a layer of velvety, seamless, dark black skin, raynall was truly a feast for my eyes.

raynall's passion was the ministry. while finishing his master's degree by day at a regional seminary, he was also employed on the weekends as the assistant pastor of a small but energetic church in the midtown area. in the evenings, raynall repaired computers in his home for extra cash while his dutiful wife held a full time job as a registered pediatric nurse.

raynall often told me that once he finished his schooling, he and his wife would begin working on having a family. both raynall's wife and himself wanted to one day have two boys and two girls.

on this particular thursday afternoon, raynall and i were taking a long, warm shower together after having sex.

we were at his simple home, a quaint little two bedroom bungalow in grandview, while his unknowing wife was dutifully working a double shift at a hospital somewhere in the city. other than the soothing, edenic sounds of the shower, the little, tidy, house was perfectly quiet and tranquil. as i stood under the shower with raynall, i couldn't even perceive the sound of the quietest of cars passing by on the cul-de-sac outside.

i closed my eyes and embraced the present. these moments with raynall were private, incredibly peaceful, and intimate. i looked forward to them.

my tender encounters with raynall provided a stark contrast to my bestial encounters with robert. being with robert was all about hard pounding and deep thrusting. it was animalistic and emotionally existentialist. afterwards, robert would just shower and i left.

with raynall, the encounters were about exploring, sharing, and exchanging of ourselves and our bodies. intercourse was just a part of encounters with raynall. with robert, it was nearly all of it. raynall had adjusted the shower so that the water drizzled out as a mist. raynall liked it that way. he liked to have the water light gently on us while we slowly explored and washed each other's bodies.

i once asked raynall if there were any special reasons why he liked to shower together like this. he gave me some odd but intriguing reasons based on something he learned in one of his theology classes. raynall explained something about the mist rising from the earth and the creation of man. what raynall said was fascinating at the time and i promised him that i would look more into it later. i never did..

i don't know if i can call raynall spiritual or not, but he seemed to inject a lot of mystical concepts and ideologies into a lot of our discussions and activities. raynall felt that, when i ejaculated inside of him, we were exchanging some sort of spiritual energy and force and creating in each other's psyche some kind of life.

it was deep and intriguing, but inside it made me somewhat uncomfortable. in all honesty, i didn't see how my ejaculating inside of raynall could create some kind of life force. no babies were going to be conceived from what we were doing and so i just didn't comprehend it the way raynall did. raynall seemed to feel it, however. i think he was looking at it from some kind of perspective combining psychology, religion, sociology, and cultural studies.

in any event, raynall was leaning against the wall, while i held a nearly consumed bar of cocoa butter lotion in my hand. i was slowly lathering his body and then wiping it down.

i had started at his feet and worked my way up past his shins, thighs, and his abdomen.

while washing raynall's abdomen, i saw his dick starting to get erect. he had ejaculated when i was inside of him, but now he was getting aroused again.

it didn't take raynall long to recycle. he was in very good health, he ate very well, and he exercised daily.

in the silence, i slowly knelt down and placed his erect dick on my gently on my lips. as it hardened up, i began to lick it, starting with the head and down the shaft. as raynall moaned and breathed heavily, i surrounded his dick with my mouth and began to move my tongue up and down his erect member.

i rarely gave men oral sex, but for some reason today i felt so inclined.

usually, i was the "top". i was the one doing the penetrating or on the receiving end of oral. however, for some reason today, i wanted to feel raynall deep inside me.

maybe, i was feeling vulnerable that day. i had been feeling sort of troubled ever since that chat room conversation on dl brothers. in all honesty, i had been troubled for a long time about my lifestyle and the way i concealed it but i guess no one had put it to me like that room did.

i had never had the things bothering me thrown into my face in such a confrontational manner like i did in that chat room. it was blunt, raw, and confrontational. i turned around in the shower and bent over, gripping the edges of the tub with my hands.

“i want it.” came from my lips. i could feel the warm misting water landing on my back.

i could hear raynall stop in his mental tracks and could almost feel him looking at me in disbelief. i had only been penetrated a few times before and those times i did it more out of a sense of obligation for a brother who had really satisfied me and now wanted to taste my goods.

until now, i had never looked forward to being penetrated or even anticipated it. this moment was the first time i really wanted to feel another man inside me.

raynall gingerly stepped out of the shower, was gone for a minute, and then came back.

i didn't move. i knew where he went. he knew that i didn't do this normally and so he got some lubricant. i could hear him pop the cap followed by the hissing sound of squirting lubricant and then raynall greasing himself.

for some reason, i wanted to be hurt. in some twisted and bizarre way, i wanted to be punished. a surge of masochism rose up within me and i wanted to feel intense pain. somehow, i felt that i did not have a right to enjoy making love to men because what i was doing was wrong. i was hurting other people. i was a dl brother. i was scandalous. i was trifling. i was lowdown. i was the enemy of my people. my clandestine actions were destroying women and children and ripping families asunder.

at the same time, i didn't want to feel the pain of raynall's entire thick phallus deep inside me. it was like i wanted to be punished but in a way i didn't. maybe, in a way, i was looking for some emotional resolution that simply did not exist or some happy medium that was just not there and never would be there.

maybe i was looking for some special spot between a heaven of physical euphoria and a hell of personal remorse or some special cosmos lurking within the gates of purgatory where i could find peace. maybe i was just seeking some kind of spiritual and emotional resolution for the conflict that had been mounting inside of me.

as raynall entered me, i could tell he was intentionally inhibiting himself. i could feel that it was only the very tip of his manhood inside of me. so, i rose up a little bit and, after spreading my legs for bracing, i reached back, grabbed his sides and pulled him all the way in. i could feel raynall within in me. it was throbbing, warm, and soothing.

slowly, raynall begin to gently move himself in and out of me. with each tender, deep thrust, i could feel his heart beating through his erect dick. it seemed to reverberate from within him to within me through the very depths of my bowels and then permeate my entire body. i could feel my own dick become aroused and firm. it became so sensitive that even the few misty drops of water that were landing on it's tip of it sent waves of chills through my complete body.

as the mist from the shower gently lay upon us, i wondered if maybe there was something to what raynall had been saying about eden. maybe we were exchanging some kind of spiritual energy each time we came together. was it possible that being together was doing something for raynall that his wife, or any woman, would simply be unable to do? maybe raynall was right.

maybe men, especially black men, should share their bodies with each other to energize each other. was it possible that, instead of exchanging violence and death and self-hate with each other that we should exchange our bodies, our essence, our life giving fluids? was it possible that raynall and i were simply regenerating ourselves through ourselves and within ourselves? in a unique and innovative way, were we saving the black man by what we were doing? is it possible that each time raynall and i made love, we were bringing deliverance to each other and then to our brothers?

as raynall placed his hands around my waist and draw me in to meet each thrust, i couldn't help but wonder if i was really having a spiritual awakening or only succeeding in rooting myself in self-deceit. between the soothing fullness i was feeling from raynall's manhood, the warm misty spray settling on my body, and the steady relaxing movement of my muscles, i began to feel lightheaded. my head began to feel as if it were swimming in some kind syrupy, opium sea. i could feel my legs getting weak and my arms getting heavy.

involuntary groanings and mutterings began to fall liberally from my lips. i couldn't feel them being spoken but i could hear them after they had been spoken. i wanted raynall to punish me more, to hurt me more, and to make me repent of my wickedness. however, i knew there was simply no way he would do that to me.

yet, his phallus inside me felt so incredibly and lustfully good that i wanted him to just drive it into me until became one inseparable entity. i could feel my legs shaking and vibrating and my breathing getting shallow. my body was near orgasm, i could sense. but, in another sense, it was like i was feeling my body from another place. i felt as if i were seeing myself from some kind of other dimension. within, i felt like i was feeling my body through some kind of mystical hand that was reaching down and cradling my existence.

raynall emptied himself inside me as i also emptied myself. it was slow, strong, and yet draining.

a few minutes later, we were placidly sitting in the tub. raynall was straddling me from behind with thick his arms wrapped lazily around my waist.

my entire body was spent and flaccid and i was slumped down so that the back of my head was resting upon his raynall's hairless chest. i could feel his powerful heart beating against the back of my head. we were laying there on each other, with our eyes closed, as the cool film from the shower above descended and lighted upon our skin like butterflies lighting up a newly blossomed flower.

as i lay here, my mind drifted back many years.

i was seventeen when i had my first lover. her name was callita and we had known each other since we were both in the same junior high government class. callita and i had a strong friendship and it lasted for many years.

callita was a large, medium toned girl with a lot of intelligence and confidence. for a teenager, she had a very laid back and secure attitude. callita didn't make value judgements on other people, nor did she participate in the routine high school rumor mills and cliques. in fact, i don't think she had a real enemy in the entire city. callita was very cool like that.

my junior year, i had gotten my hands on an old, ugly, green '71 cutlass and began driving it to school. most days, i would pick up callita from her house on the way there and drop her off on the way back home.

callita lived near linwood boulevard in a small house that was torn down just a few years after we both graduated from high school. her mother was deceased and her father frequently worked a grueling two p.m. to eleven p.m. shift at the automobile plant. as a result, callita was home alone a lot of the time.

it was during this time home alone, at age fifteen, she discovered sex.

somewhat more mature than most girls her age, callita took the initiative to get on birth control. she went to the health department and got the free birth control pills and took them religiously. i knew this simply because callita shared it with me. there was very little we kept from each other.

her first partner was a seventeen year old boy from one of the neighboring high schools. from what i understood, he and callita had quite a torrid sexual relationship for a good year and a half before he decided to date someone else.

the relationship was over but callita's appetite had been whetted. now that she had experienced sex, she wanted more.

i don't really remember what the exact things were that took place leading up to sex between us. one afternoon, callita and i were laying there in her bed, listening to the radio, when she brushed up against me and nearly knocked me off the bed. i brushed her back and soon we were playfully brushing each other back and forth. finally, we were mischievously wrestling and she ended up on top of me.

for a few awkward seconds we were positioned with her on top. callita was straddling me and pinning me down with her arms. after an eerie moment of awkward silence, she began to slowly grind her pelvis against mine, looking dead in my eyes the entire time. i didn't complain nor did i make any movements to stop her.

prior to this, my only sexual experience had been wet dreams and masturbating when i could get a private moment. under my mattress at home, i had concealed an old towel that i would lay on the sheets and then grind myself against until i ejaculated on it. when the towel got too abrasive from dried fluids to use, i would put it in the washing machine, dry it, and then hide it back between the mattress and box spring.

masturbation felt good, but i suspected the real thing felt considerably better. some of the boys, and even more of the girls, at school were apparently having sex and the ways they were describing made me want it even more.

as callita moved her body against mine, it only took a few seconds for me to reach a full erection. sensing it, she grinded against me even harder, nearly forcing me to ejaculate.

finally, without a word, she moved off of me and then undid my pants and and slipped them off, throwing them to the floor.

callita then removed her clothing and mounted me, ever so gently placing my dick fully inside of her. once we were copulated, callita began to thrust her hips again.

it was my first time. when i ejaculated a few seconds later, callita unmounted me and layed next to me, laughing at my lack of staying power. i felt embarrassed in a way, but somehow i found a way to laugh along with callita.

about ten minutes later, we tried it again. this time i lasted longer. after that, we did it again. within a few weeks, sex between callita and i became a regular routine.

callita and i had very frequent sex for the rest our high school days. we experimented with oral sex, anal sex, and various positions. callita discovered her father's adult video collection and we watched those and then emulated what we had seen.

after graduation, callita and i parted ways. she took a full scholarship to a college on the east coast, and i went to western kansas. we lost touch and i rarely came home.

at the end of my sophomore year in college, i wondered how callita was doing. so, i went to her house. it was gone. her house, along with the entire block, had been bought out and destroyed to make way for some kind of warehouse styled grocery store.

i never heard from callita and never found out what happened to her.

when i left raynall's home after feeling him spill his essence inside me one more time, i told him that it may be awhile before i came back over. he asked me why. i told him that i didn't have an answer and raynall said that he understood.

one thing i appreciated about raynall was his understanding nature. he didn't condemn or judge, he only sought to embrace and restore.

as i stood at raynall's front door, i was overcome with a moment of bluntness and i remarked "you made me feel so good tonight that it scared me."

then i left.

cemetery

when i was a child

we used to go to junction city

and visit my uncle clifton

he was a large man

who always kept a flat top haircut

his house was this interesting

box shaped

three bedroom home

with a flat roof

and a huge yard

on the side

inside

every room

had two doors

one door in from another room

and one door out to another room

*uncle clifford had been a musician
and had a big room full of organs and pianos
and drums and guitars
they were all dusty and unused
except the organ
he was good at the organ
in fact
he took me to the indian springs mall
when i was about ten
and began playing the organ
at the piano store
he started playing
and it was so good
that people began to come
from all over
soon
there was a crowd
and when he got done
everyone applauded*

but

in his house

i never saw any women there

not in his home

when we came to visit

when he came

to visit us

he would go out to the strip clubs

and come back in

at two or three

in the morning

uncle clifton never got married

but

he had one room

with stacks and stacks and stacks

of nasty magazines

and all sorts

of nasty nasty pictures

all over the wall

one day

while everyone was outside

eating barbecue and playing softball

i went into that room

and poked through the magazines

after awhile

when i heard someone else in the house

i went out the door

into the bathroom

and claimed

my stomach hurt

leavenworth veteran's cemetery was very tranquil and nearly empty on monday afternoons. other than memorial day, the cemetery was always nearly empty.

i had only went on memorial day a few times. it was the years immediately after my mother had passed, when my father would ask me to take him. after a few years, dementia set in, and my father had no idea that mama was gone and so he never asked me to take him again.

that day, i had driven to leavenworth to see an old friend of mine in the military hospital there. the same age as me, he had went into the army while i went to college. now, he was a major

within a few years of retirement and i still had another twenty years of teaching ahead of me before i could even think of retiring.

after i saw my friend, who was suffering from torn ligaments in his knee, i went for a drive around the cemetery. my mother and father were both buried there and so i drove around to the section where they were buried. i had no plans on getting out. i parked my car on the side and just looked around. there was no one else there. then again, on a monday afternoon in the middle of july, what reason would someone have to be there except for a funeral?

i really don't have many good memories of my parents. that is sad, but it is true. my upbringing was filled with a lot of screaming, yelling, shouting, and threats.

my mother, in her youth, was a short and shapely woman with very light skin and thin, wispy hair. she was originally from a very small town in louisiana called karis. her mother was a black louisiana sharecropper and her father was a frenchman who was traveling through louisiana. during his travels he met my maternal grandmother, she was about seventeen at the time, and she became pregnant.

i'm not sure of what happened to my maternal grandmother or grandfather after my mother was conceived. i do know that my mother was raised by her aunt, an older woman named aunt orleans. everyone called her 'auntie'.

when i was about eleven we went to louisiana on a two week trip and i met auntie there. since i was born 22 years after my parents married, auntie was a very old woman when i saw her for the first time. what i do remember about auntie is that she looked a lot like my mother. if i had not been told otherwise, i would have thought that auntie had borne my mother.

auntie was short, portly, with very light skin and small features. her hair was nearly gone by the time i met her. from the few strands that remained, i could tell it was originally thin like my mother's. auntie had very few teeth in her mouth and when she smiled, you saw nothing but gums.

karis was a very primitive and backwards town, even when we went to visit in the seventies.

auntie, like nearly everyone else within walking distance of her, lived in a small two room shack next to an open drainage ditch that was filled with flowing human waste and crawdads. it was a bizarre sight, but something the residents of karis had grown used to.

these ditches ran all over the town. i vividly remember standing next to it in amazement and watching the waste and crawdads just perpetually flow by.

the interior of auntie's house was strange. the walls were covered with hubcaps, license plates, crude hand painted signs, and some old pictures in thick wooden frames. her furniture was old and broken down. when you sat on the couch, you sank down about seven or eight inches. the hardwood floor was clean but seriously warped and even had a few holes where you could see to the dirt below the house.

auntie's kitchen had an old stove, refrigerator, and broken down dinette set with a deeply yellowed linoleum table. the floor in auntie's kitchen was covered with a thin brown carpet that could not hide the fact that the floor had been tiled and retiled and was now actually so warped that it was wavy. in the corners of the kitchen was what appeared to be thick bands of some kind of trim. upon further view, i shockingly discovered that this thick band was actually cockroaches moving up and down from auntie's floor to the ceiling and back again.

at night, auntie chewed tobacco, spitting it across the room and into an old rusty coffee can, and casually talked about long dead friends and relatives that she said would levitate through the streets of karis after everyone was asleep.

auntie had raised my mother and her three older sisters. they all grew up, eventually married, and left karis for kansas city. even though they had invited auntie to leave karis and move in with them, she chose to stay here. karis was her home.

years later, after my mother died, i found out that she used to have "screaming fits" that would cause the teacher of the one room school where she attended to ask her older sisters

to carry her home. when my mother was eleven, the fits became so frequent that the teacher told my mother's older sisters to simply not bring her back.

my father was from a small town in kansas named sinai. he had eight brothers and sisters and was raised on a farm. even though all the siblings graduated from high school, none attended college. all the boys joined the service and all the girls got married.

my mother and father met during world war two when my dad was passing through kansas city. from what i understand, they met at a ice cream parlor in the segregated black section in nineteen forty one and were married the next year.

even though my parents were young when they married, it took them nearly twenty years to have children. along the way, my mother suffered a series of apparently emotionally and physically devastating miscarriages in the two decades before giving finally birth.

one miscarriage was apparently in the last few months before birth, and it left mama hospitalized for a lengthy period of time. from what my father told me later in life, she was never the same emotionally after that miscarriage.

when my older brother was born, my parents were ecstatic. it had taken them a long time for this dream to come true.

the family picture albums that i inherited from my parents when they died, are just filled with pictures of my parents and my older brother. you can see the overflowing happiness and riveting joy in their faces. however, in some of these old black and white pictures, my mother's face seemed to be thinly shielding a deep, piercing inner pain.

by the time i was born, four years later, my mother had suffered virulent off and on battles with schizophrenia that were getting worse and more intense each time.

some of my first memories, from early years of elementary school are of my mother sitting in her chair, mumbling and rumbling to herself as if she were arguing with some inner antagonizing forces.

at that age, i thought that she was playing and being funny. i would jump on her lap and tug on her dress in the hope of joining in this game.

when i was in the third grade, our school had a christmas program and they asked us to tell our parents to buy us white dress shirts for the program. i remember watching my mother set at the kitchen table and argue with the note that i had brought home referring to the white dress shirt. she fumed and screamed at it "just because you want us to purchase new shirts doesn't mean we have the money to do it.". finally, she exploded and ripped the note into shards of paper and threw them all over the floor.

as a student in catholic school, we were taught that evil demons and entities inhabited the earth, causing wickedness and destruction. i believed that these demons and entities had invaded our house and had set their targets on mother. in my mind, when she exploded into a raging typhoon of fury at some enemy that was invisible to our eyes, she was doing god's work and fighting for the forces of heaven.

as time went on, mother worsened and her rages evolved from verbal tirades into tantrums that involved throwing dishes and lamps. once, during my fifth grade year, mother had spent all night preparing thanksgiving dinner. the next day, before it was time to eat, she suddenly exploded and virulently threw all of the still hot food into the backyard.

as time went on, mother became more and more lost into a world of arguing and fighting with her invisible, demonic enemies. even though mother was able to do the routine household functions, for months at a time we would have no meaningful discussions with her. mama was gone, far, far away and her body replaced with a glassy eyed schizophrenic warrior who was growing wearier and wearier as the battles raged on.

instead of talking to my brother and myself about our lives and what we liked, wanted, and envisioned, mother would talk to us as if we were co-conspirators with the unseen enemies in her mind.

by the time, i reached late grade school, my mother was entering menopause. her behavior became unbelievably bizarre and unpredictable.

my mother was never affectionate towards me as far as i can remember. most times that she touched me, it was as part of some disciplinary action. i rarely recall anytime before her last year of life where she hugged me, held me, or displayed any real affection towards me. in fact, i only remember her telling me once that she loved me. that was two days before she finally succumbed to lung cancer.

but, things got worse as she entered 'the change'. she would murmur and grumble while doing the dishes and then explode and throw dishes and cooking utensils at us.

descending into her personal mental hell, mama began to make bizarre accusations towards my brother and myself. she accused us of spying on her and monitoring her movements. we were even accused of trying to find out how much money mama had saved in the bank. mama constantly accused us of using drugs and even creeping out of the house late at night, committing vicious criminal acts like rape and murder in the early morning hours, and then slipping back in before dawn so that we would not be detected.

during one battle, mama even accused my brother and myself of engaging in forbidden acts of homosexual incest.

this was all pretty bizarre for a child growing up. i went to school and never shared with anyone the bizarre secrets of what my home was like.

i buried myself in reading comic books and children's novels. i would read these materials and then imagine myself as being in some faraway place and time where i was important and cherished and saving the world.

mama should have received treatment or been institutionalized for a time. however, this was the mid 1970's and black folks just didn't, and still don't too much, believe in mental health treatment.

by the time i reached late elementary school, mama's voices were telling her to walk around the house completely nude, stopping in the doorway or my room, or my brother's room, and cursing us out for literally hours end. sometimes, she would come into our bedrooms at four and five a.m., turning on the lights, and screaming in our faces to get up and clean the house.

as time went on, mama was overtaken with paranoia. i remember her once destroying a science project on plants i was completing. she claimed it was causing 'evil' in our house.

most of the time, father was not home. our father had always worked two or three jobs. so, even though he lived with us, we never saw father on a real regular basis. by the time our mother's sickness had reached a physically dangerous stage, father was never home during waking hours. he would come in way after dark and leave way before dawn.

i remember laying in bed and hearing him come in at ten or eleven o'clock, take a bath, get a bite to eat and sleep on the living room sofa. later, i would hear him get up at three or four in the morning, take a bath, fix his lunch, drink his coffee, whistle a song, and leave out the back door. in the pre-dawn darkness, i could hear him starting his old white rambler automobile and then drive off into another day.

after my brother graduated high school, he left for college. after that, we rarely saw him, even during breaks.

i entered high school as my brother was entering college. during this time mother changed in a most cruel fashion. she had less arguments with the invisible shadowy figures and began to make viciously cruel comments and actions directed specifically towards me.

as a high school student, i had a serious problem with facial acne and i remember hearing mama, during her fits of illness, say again and again "that is why noone wants you, because you are so ugly". she called me dumb, and stupid, and ignorant. she swore that i would be a failure and never amount to anything. then she would go to the room where my father and her slept, slam the door, and start crying hysterically.

one saturday afternoon, i was driving her to the emergency room because she had a bad case of intestinal flu and mama was laying in the back seat of the car, murmuring to herself and unseen adversaries, and continually barking out the cruelest of insults about my looks and future. finally, she just said “you ain’t shit, never were shit, and never will be shit!”.

when i was a sophomore, the dentist told my mother i needed braces or my teeth would not be straight. at his office, mama told him that she would see what she could do. all the way home, mama murmured as if the invisible voices were fighting with her. when we got home mama shouted at me as she slammed the door “we’re not going to get you any fucking braces because you are a worthless piece of shit!”. then, she sat down at the kitchen table and broke into tears.

the most cutting and painful remarks of all the remarks was “i wish you were never born”. mama began to say this on a regular basis. sometimes she would shout it at me in the midst of a battle. other times, it would flow from her lips as casually as if she were talking about the weather.

i finished high school with a full ride academic scholarship to college. at first, i wanted to stay home and attend a local college. i was trying to save my aging parents the hassle of being forced to drive me away to college.

but, after my mother entered one of her episodes and repeatedly shouted at me “get the fuck out”, i got angry. i accepted the scholarship and left my parents in the home by themselves. after i left for college, other than summer and holiday visits home, i never lived with my parents again.

i knew that it hurt my parents to live alone in that house after having raised two children. one time, i had come home to visit for the summer and on my last day, my mother broke down in tears as she tightly hugged me goodbye. she cried for a good fifteen minutes. while i felt very badly for mama, i couldn’t seem to get past all the horrendous memories of life in that three bedroom house in kansas city. it wasn’t until well after i left that i had any significant amount of self esteem. in fact, i think that if i had thought more of myself, i would have chosen a different and more challenging career pathway.

after my parents were both dead, i was more accepting of the fact that my mother was deeply mentally ill. what appeared to be incredibly cruel and evil behavior was probably the natural result of a lifetime of long decades spent battling invisible demons in the mind and emotional parasites in the heart that fed on your very sanity.

sometimes, i wondered how things would have been if my mother had gotten the mental help that she so desperately needed. it's very possible that her taking one simple pill a day could have changed the entire destiny of our whole family. with the right help, my brother and i could have enjoyed childhoods full of boundless happiness and joy instead of deep sadness and intense emotional pain.

i knew that nothing is really accomplished by looking back and saying "what if". however, there was no way i could even be who i was without acknowledging where i had come from. because where i had come from was so incredibly dark, i had to sometimes meditate on "what if" just to find any internal resolution and peace with it.

sometimes, i wondered if the shit i was doing now had something to do with my past. i thought that all competent psychologists and psychiatrists would say that my present sexual behavior could find some kind of rationalization in my past life experiences. however, if there were some bridge between being called a "piece of shit" and proceeding to engage in repeated casual sex with multiple men and women, i just didn't see it.

after sitting at the cemetery for a long time, i looked at my watch. it was time to drive back home to kansas city.

i started up my car and left.

as i slowly drove out of the cemetery and back onto the empty highway, i realized that since i had driven my aunt here on a memorial day years ago, i had never stood at the grass plots where my parents were buried. inside, i wondered if the fact that i would stop here but not walk to the actual plots indicated that i was afraid of something.

maybe i was willing to acknowledge the various issues of my life but not willing to confront them.

session 7

when i was about seven, my paternal grandfather came from california to stay with us. my sister and i had to share the bed while grandfather stayed in what used to be her room. i don't remember a lot. mainly that he was big, very dark, bald headed with glasses, and he had very large hands. his hands were very calloused and rough. in fact, i remember the palms of his hands feeling like sandpaper.

while he was with us, he built some stairs on the side of the house. in fact, those stairs lasted for twenty years. for about two weeks, he was out there in his dark blue overalls, boots, and plaid shirt – hammering and sawing, measuring and balancing.

his wife stayed in california. i had no idea why? as i got older, i realized they were separated.

one day, my mother and i came in from the grocery store and found my grandfather stretched out on the bed. he was dead. he died from a heart attack. his body was sent back to california and he was buried out there.

several years later, we went to california to visit his wife – our grandmother. i had never seen her before in my entire life. she was very old, bound in a wheelchair. she was nearly bald and her turquoise eyes were not able to focus. she just asked “is this harold junior?” and said nothing else to me the entire time there.

six months after we visited her, she died also and was buried. i was eleven years old at the time.

in southern kansas city, a few miles west of i-435, leonard's lounge had the best african american friday happy hour in town. from five to seven in the evening, you could buy an entire basket of spicy hot chicken wings for only two dollars and all drinks were only a single dollar each. no other place in kansas city could top this. it was the best deal going.

by some standards, a crude little shack under a bridge, leonard's was originally constructed in the sixties to be another in a franchise in some kind of hamburger chain. after it failed to sell any burgers the building was shut down for over ten years. finally, a local brother named leonard willis purchased it back in the late seventies.

first, leonard had all the restaurant furnishings removed. then, he turned it into a lounge for mature black people thirty and over.

a very personable man, leonard had transformed this place into such a success that he was able to use the revenues to open a few other joints down on troost and prospect. leonard was street smart and savvy. he was a true black businessman.

one reason for the success of leonard's lounge was the ambiance this place had. leonard's was decked with dark plywood walls that were spotted with framed pictures of old and current black celebrities. from the front door to the back door, leonard's was laced with soft, dim lighting that was easy on the eyes.

on one side of leonard's was a old fifty inch projection television with a slightly crooked and blurry screen. in fact, the screen was so old and in such bad shape that if there were a boxing match or basketball game on, you had to sit at least ten feet away to clearly comprehend what was going on.

on the other side of leonard's, was a full bar and small dance floor. the bartender had a full slate of various house concoctions and the dance floor in front of it was so small that it was basically good for some pre-coital bumping and grinding.

in leonard's people sat on old battered round dark red wood stools with matching tables. they added a real folksy and somewhat ghetto flavor to the place. they were a bit rickety and a person had to carefully navigate themselves onto one, especially if they had been drinking. it wasn't uncommon to see or hear of someone falling off of a one of these stools after having too much alcohol. but, it was cool. in leonard's, you just laughed, picked yourself up, and went back to your drink.

in leonard's, the restrooms were tiny, barely larger than a janitor's closet and just as dim as the club itself. they weren't very clean and the ladies remarked that they tended to hold their bowel movements until they got home rather than use these pitiful facilities. the chipped and yellowing porcelain toilet stools were old and stained, as were the sinks with their tarnished chrome fixtures.

either on the tank or the sink, leonard would sit an old sliver of cheap bath soap and a damp roll of paper towels for drying your hands. i honestly doubted many people actually used those soaps and towels.

despite all this, leonard had a crush of people during friday's happy hour. word of mouth had made leonard's place popular all over kansas city. black folks would drive from as far south as olathe, as far north as the airport, as far west as wyandotte county and as far east as lee's summit.

sometimes, leonard's would be so packed that people would just stand outside and place their orders through an back open window to a waitress who would pass them on to the cooks and bartenders.

inside the club itself, people would be so packed that it was nearly impossible for a man to make his way from one side to the other without feeling an endless assortment of round breasts and rotund buttocks brushing up against him.

however, i doubt that any of these men complained. i felt that the men loved it. i felt that maybe that is why they were constantly looking for an excuse to go from one end of the club to the other.

with his square glasses, half dried jheri curl, gapped teeth, mouth-full-of-gold-grin and superfly clothes from the seventies, leonard would work the happy hour crowd like a political candidate.

he would greet brothers with a wide gleaming smile, the soul power handshake, and some worn out jive line stolen from a blaxpoitation flick.

leonard liked to greet the ladies with a lusty head-to-toe visual inventory, shaking his head as he looked them up and down and groaning something like “oh my lawd” and “lookatdis”. he would follow it up with some very questionable, half grinding, pelvis-to-pelvis, breast-crushing hugs.

noone seemed to mind. it was leonard’s place and everyone seemed to dig what he was into.

on this particular friday, i was sitting at a table with my friends james, aaron, william, and mario. it had been a few days since pulling that double shift with renee and roger and i had just got done telling my friends about renee.

james was actually my second cousin. my mother was james’ father’s first cousin. our relationship was kind of different. sometimes, we were as close as brothers. other times, we didn’t talk for months. james had a career job at the car factory down in the industrial area of town. i think that he was into welding or something like that. he made very good money but didn’t seem to have any economic ambition. single, with a child somewhere in arkansas that he paid a few hundred dollars a month for, james didn’t try to save or invest at all. at the age of 35, he had just moved out of my mother’s place a few years before and was content to rent in a very low-end part of town.

aaron was my friend from college. we had managed to stay in touch over the years, only losing touch when i went to work in atlanta immediately after graduation. aaron hadn’t finished his degree but had done quite well with his own custodial maintenance business.

currently separated from his wife, aaron had a very surprising knowledge of economic principles and investment strategies. then again, with three children and a desire for them to succeed in life, he needed to be smart with his money and he knew it.

william was a different kind of brother. i had known william through aaron. william was sort of nerdy. he seemed to lack confidence in himself and his ability to talk to women. he was deep into computers and seemed to be just as successful with computers as he was miserable with women. william never seemed to be able to date attractive or secure women and he never seemed to get treated well, even though he would spend lots of money on the women he try to date. william got used and then discarded a lot.

it was not uncommon for william to spend a few hundred dollars on an extravagant date for some sister he had been smitten with, only to have his phone number placed on call block the next day.

he had a master's degree in computer science and, in addition to being a computer analyst, he taught a few evening classes at the community college. while being a professional success, william was a classic social underachiever.

mario was a straight up cockhound. there was no doubt about it and he didn't even really try to hide it. he was all about getting easy sex. his only use for a woman was as a receptacle for his semen and he never denied it. twenty four hours of the day, seven days a week mario's mind seemed to always be on getting into a woman's body. if mario could, he would shamelessly screw a woman, her best friend, her sister, her mama, and her grown daughter if he felt he could get away with it.

the funny thing about mario was that it so obvious that he didn't care, yet he got lots of dates and sex. mario didn't lie to women but he didn't volunteer information either. and, yet, he still continued to get laid.

as far as a job goes, mario had some kind of counseling job at a juvenile detention center. he never said much about his job, mario was too busy talking about sex.

to be honest, to me it didn't seem that mario enjoyed sex that much, he just liked the conquest. mario enjoyed racking up numbers and his last count was between seventy five and eighty, depending on how many drinks he had consumed.

so, we were all sitting there in leonard's crowded spot. there was nothing particularly special about this evening, just the fact that we were there.

"what about that one over there. the one with the tight black dress, you gonna go after that." mario said, tapping william on the shoulder and nodded towards the dance floor.

"leave that boy alone" interjected james "you know he need a woman from church"

"yeah....church women" added aaron sarcastically.

i remembered that aaron's wife, who was constantly threatening to leave him, was a devout church member.

"man, i aint' trying to get with noone." william said flatly.

"man, what are you waiting for?" i asked.

"i'm just tired of sisters and their issues. white women don't do the crap that sisters do." william responded with pained bitterness in his voice.

"white women? not that again."

williams went back forth with this 'black women ain't worth it – i'm gonna get a white woman' thing.

"what about it?" william asked.

"i've just heard that so many times. the white woman thing."

"maybe it's true."

"i don't think so. i know white brothers who make the same complaints black men make."

“and what is that?”

“that white women complain and are never satisfied. that they want a thug and not a gentleman. that they just don’t appreciate a good man. they can’t be trusted and the rest of it.”

“well, i know that is true for black women.” william declared.

a busty waitress with red hair in a black minidress that was way too tight brought a basket of wings that james had ordered forty five minutes earlier. he gave her two dollars and then a two dollar tip. she grinned revealing a missing front tooth and then left.

we continued to talk.

“but, you don’t know every black women.” i pleaded.

“i know enough to make a reasonable assumption.’

“reasonable assumption? you trying to get scientific up in here?”

“man, i’ve just had enough of black women and their issues. either they think they are too good for a nigga, or they still tripping off of some nigga that popped them and left them hanging, or they just plain crazy, or they are religious fanatics, or they got a house full of ignorant bad ass kids!”

“damn bruh, you sound bitter!” i responded.

william did sound bitter.

“i’m just realistic.” william retorted.

“well, let me ask you something...” interjected marcus.

william just turned and looked at him as to say “what?”

“how do you come to women?”

“what do you mean?”

“i’ve hung with you and i’ve never seen you do anymore than what you are doing now, just sit there and look. you gotta talk to sisters?”

“and that’s what you do?”

mario just nodded and fished in his pocket. he pulled out a phone number scribbled on a piece of paper.

“i got this when i went to the restroom fifteen minutes ago...from the one in the gold dress over there!”

we all looked and saw a cute little dark skinned sister in a shimmering gold dress sitting at the bar and sipping on a blue drink. she looked over her shoulder at us as if she could feel us looking, smiled, and then turned back.

“and guess what?” continued mario.

silence

“i’m gonna ride that black tail till it is raw meat. that’s how i get down.”

william leaned back. he was disgusted and pissed. but, it was his fault, he didn’t approach women. so, he had a limited experience that, unfortunately for him, was not positive.

“so.....” added james “now that william has been punked again. rayman...you still meeting sisters from the internet?”

i laughed.

that was another one of my little hobbies, meeting sisters on the internet. i had been doing it for a few years now. and, i had to admit, it had brought me a lot of pleasure.

it started when i got some kind of cd for free internet service and tried it out. after being online for over year, i clicked on “chat rooms” one day and found an “african american” section. in that section, i found a room for “kansas city”. and, to my surprise, there were over one hundred people in the chat room. most of them were women.

the chat was cool. it was about local places and events, politics and religion, work and school, romance and dating, and of course....sex.

“yep, still doing the internet.” i responded.

“man, you get a lot of tail from there, don’t you?” james asked.

“well, women are women and they love to screw.”

“a guy i work with tells me there are some real freaks on there internet!”

james was telling the truth. after i did the chat thing for awhile, i found i could click on a button and see the person’s profile. the profile often had a picture that had been scanned or taken with a digital camera. and, some of those sisters were really cute.

so then, i began to e-mail the sisters. soon after the e-mails go back and forth, the phone numbers are exchanged, you talk on the phone for awhile, and then you meet.

in all honesty, most times i slept with the sister either on the first date or the second. they were just as hungry for it as me and just as willing to give it up as i was willing to take it.

to me, it seemed that, just like sisters everywhere, not one that i met on the internet had insisted that i wear a condom. so i never did.

while james, aaron, william, and mario continued their conversation, i drifted into my own little world.

i remember one day

when i was in the seventh grade

i walked home from school

like i always did

when i got to the block where i lived

i saw police cars, fire trucks, and an ambulance

as i moved closer

i saw they were at my house

when i got closer

the police stopped me

i said

"i live here"

they told me there was a problem

finally, they brought my mother out

she was on a stretcher

in a straight-jacket

she was just screaming

and screaming

and screaming

and my older brother was behind them

i had never seen him cry

that much
and they
put her in an ambulance
and drove away
after i went inside
i found that
every mirror
and every window
in the house
was broken

it was around nine. james had to leave. he was doing four hours of overtime in the morning.

mario left in search of sex. aaron left for church. he wanted to find his wife at choir practice and talk her into coming back home. so, it was just william and me. in fact, most of the happy hour crowd was gone. instead of a packed, shoulder to shoulder club, it was now about three quarters full.

william just sat there, looking at a newspaper he picked up from somewhere while i was daydreaming.

“so, when was the last time you had a relationship.” i asked

“it’s been a long time.” william added dejectedly.

“what do you think the problem is?”

“i don’t know. i just don’t get along well with women.”

“well, you do have a point about one thing that you always say.”

“what’s that?”

“sisters do seem to prefer the hard edged thug types or the don’t care niggaz more than the nice brothers”

“i know”

“so why not become hard?”

“you know, sammy davis jr. once had a famous saying”

“huh?”

“i have to be me”

“what?”

“what’s what sammy said...he said ‘i have to be me’”

“and, your point is”

i looked down. my last drink, a coke and rum, was gone. i wasn’t going to order another one.

“i have to be myself. i’ll never be a thug or a hoodlum. i’ll always care about people.”

“i hear you there.”

“i’m sure i’ll meet someone eventually.”

“probably so, i agree with that.”

“i’ll probably be older. i can’t see any sister under the age of 35 wanting to be with me. they still want the thugs or the player types.”

with mario, aaron, and james gone, it seemed like we were able to have a decent conversation. william was a good brother. unfortunately, he was heavy all the time. but, now was a good time to be heavy.

“so, let me ask you something, william”

“what’s that?”

“why do you think black women gravitate to no good niggaz?”

“well, i think there’s a lot of factors involved.”

“like what?”

“how they were raised and what kind of father they had. a lot of no good men father daughters and so their daughters grow up thinking that a no good man is the type of man you are supposed to be with.”

“good point”

“and, then, there is the societal perceptions of black males. how many times are nice, considerate black men portrayed as strong and positive?”

“very rarely in the entertainment industry”

“there you go.”

“and, don’t be mistaken, the entertainment industry strongly influences our perceptions and value system.”

“you deep bruh”

“i just like to read and think about this shit”

“i see”

william was very deep. i really wanted to know more from him, so i pressed further.

“on the real, not trying to be funny, but how do you perceive me as towards women?”

“honestly?”

“honestly.”

“well, i think you just have sex with sisters and move on cause there’s no risk involved. a lot of brothers are like you.”

“like me?”

“yes, not willing to get involved, not willing to make themselves vulnerable”

“hmmm, and why do you think that is?”

“because when you are willing to get involved and open up to woman and show her what’s inside, you end up like me – alone and by yourself on a friday night.”

william just bowed his head and looked into his glass.

as we sat there, listening to some old music on the jukebox and watching the last few stragglers finish their drinks before leaving, i thought about william’s situation.

it seemed that, despite the merciless teasing we gave him, william was a man with a measure of personal dignity and integrity. he would not willingly demean a woman by lying to her in order to get her into bed. the fact that he always seemed alone and lonely may have more to do with this than his lack of social skills.

sometimes, i felt that william envied those of us who bragged on our sexual conquests and exploits. as time went on, i would find out that instead of william envying me, maybe i should have been envying william.

loose park

laying in the wet spot...

regardless of what they say

black women like to get fucked hard

real hard

and from the back

i don't know why

maybe it's some internalized mandingo concept shit

or something

but

it's the truth

if you are one of those

passive and slow and tender lovers

you better get a white woman or

something

cause a black woman might give you some

but she'd rather be fucked than

make love

loose park had a real laid back ambiance to it. especially early on saturday mornings in the summer and early fall. there would be joggers and walkers doing the trail while in their own little mental worlds. there were lots of white people in the park that day.

to me, white people come off as nicer and more cordial than black people. to be honest, i just thought that they very passive aggressive indirect communicators.

it seemed to me that, if you worked with a black person and they didn't like you, you knew it. either they won't say anything to you or they will talk to you so rudely and bluntly it will become very obvious they dislike you. as i saw it, white people who didn't like you, on the other hand, would go out of their way to come off as they were your best friend in the world. meanwhile, they would laboring behind the scenes trying to find a way to get you fired. and, when they succeed, they were the first ones in your face saying "i'm sorry to hear what happened" and feigning sympathy.

when in public, i find amusement comparing white parents to black parents. when a white child acts a out in public, their befuddled parents try all those passive aggressive indirect discipline tactics. they would gently say "that's not nice, do you think mommy wants you to call her names?" or "sally.....sally...if you keep running off, you won't get any dessert tonight". black parents, on the other hand, would pull out a belt or strap, grab the child, and beat the hell out of them. black parents got very direct and very aggressive.

it was no different with sex partners. white women would do things like try to push my head towards their privates in order for me to perform oral sex on them. black women just came out with it "nigger, eat this pussy!".

if a white woman was going down on me and i was expecting to cum in her mouth, a reluctant one might try to navigate her mouth away and up from my genital area. black women, on the

other hand, would just raise their face and say “nigga, if you think you gonna cum in my mouth, you need to ask somebody!”. it was like that.

today, white people, the cultural differences between them and black people, had been the conversation with leni here in loose park.

leni and i were sitting on a bench looking at some kids frolicking in the water and the yuppie couples walking by with their two point five children, pedicured and trimmed dogs, and cellphones hanging from their waists.

it was a saturday afternoon. we had went to a movie down on the plaza, got some chinese food at this nice corner spot, and then came up to loose park to just sit and chill. leni and i were sitting here in loose park, enjoying the cooling dusk of a hot july day and just chatting. we had just spent about fifteen minutes discussing racial differences. this was one of the things i liked about leni. she was very versatile in her conversational range.

“are you looking forward to the next school year?” leni asked.

“kind of. it’s so routine now. same old shit.” i replied.

“i know the feeling.”

“even being a lawyer?”

i was curious. leni had an interesting job in the prosecutor’s office. she had prosecuted numerous cases.

“well, in my area it is.”

“i can imagine that. being a public defender is mostly about plea bargains...right?”

“yep, lots and lots and lots of those.”

“question”. i was feeling inquisitive.

“what?”

“do you actually believe in that plea bargain shit?”

“sometimes, i think it’s the right thing. sometimes i don’t”

“what do you mean?”

“well, some people are truly victims of society and circumstance”

“true.”

“and some.”

“yes.....”

“are just plain monsters..predatory...evil.”

“ok...”

“but, because certain things have happened in their past, we sort of have an obligation to explore them as an avenue of legal defense.”

“like those twins who murdered that couple down by ward parkway?”

some former students of mine had murdered a couple and ended up getting what amounted to life sentences.

“i remember them, the johnson twins.”

“you know, i taught the.m”

“really?”

“were they bad asses in school?”

“yep. i wasn’t surprised at all when i saw them on television. those little bastards were nothing but trouble.”

“now...now..that’s not a nice thing for teacher to say.”

“shit, it’s the truth.”

she laughed

“by the way, they got fifty years each....right?” i asked.

“yep...fifty years with no parole.”

“i’m glad for that. i wouldn’t want them fuckers on the street with me.”

“i can understand that...they were kind of scary.”

“kind of?”

“yes. it was like they really weren’t remorseful about the shit they did.”

“i can believe that. they were like that in school...little fuckers.”

“is it true their mother went beserk when they got sentenced?”, i asked.

“yes, she had the be led from the courtroom.”

“well, that bitch should have been going beserk when they were getting suspended from school.”

”i agree. she wasn’t involved in their lives very much at all.”

“i did have one question.”

“what’s that?”

“did they rape that old lady before they killed her?” i asked.

“i don’t believe they were convicted of rape.”

“well, i know that, i just felt...”

“in fact, i don’t think they were even charged with it.” leni added.

“well, knowing them, i wouldn’t put it past them.”

“really?”

“leni, they were some nasty bastards. always talking about sticking their dicks up some girl some way or the other.”

“damn.”

“i just figured that since it appeared such a cut and dry murder case, filing a rape charge would just further humiliate the victims’ families and so it may just be left alone.”

“i can understand that logic. it would be sort of pointless since a rape sentence would probably run concurrently with the murder sentence.”

“that’s what i’m thinking.”

we sat in the silence for a minute and listened to some children frolicking in a nearby sandbox.

“leni, you’ve seen a lot of people go to jail, come back, and stuff. right?” i asked.

“yes, i’ve seen a lot of that.”

“i was in an internet chat room the other day and...”

“you and that internet.” leni laughed as she interrupted me.

“someone was saying there are so many gay brothers out there because of the penal system.”

“really?”

“this woman online was saying that we now glorify what she called “prison culture and it has been infiltrated into the african american male culture.”.

“hmmm, that’s deep, rayman.”

“yeah, she was talking about how a lot of dress styles in black america are derivatives of prison dress.”

“derivatives? you and your big words.”

“i’m serious. what you think?”

“well, i agree with that to a degree. a lot of young kids that come through our office are trying to wear the same things grown men wear in prison.”

“what about when it comes to sexuality? do you think the assimilation of prison culture into black culture creates homosexual men?”

“rayman, i don’t think it creates homosexual men. i think they were already gay. i don’t think being in prison makes a man gay.”

“what makes a man gay then?”

“i think people are born gay, then.”

“okay, can i ask you another question?”

“is this twenty questions?”

“shut up.”

“go ahead.”

“what do you think about gay brothers who hide the sexuality?”

“scum.”

“really?”

“hell yes, they are scum!”

“don’t you think that is harsh? calling them scum?”

“no, i mean these brothers are deceiving sisters. i don’t want to sleep with no man who is dipping his dick into other men.”

“why not?”

“that is just plain nasty. nasty nasty nasty.”

“so, are you homophobic?”

“i don’t think i am homophobic but i don’t like the idea of my man putting his dick in a another man’s nasty butt and then putting it in my mouth or pussy.”

“i can understand that.”

“no you can’t.”

“why do you say that?”

“because men don’t have a problem with two women having sex but they do have a problem with two men having sex.”

“well...”

“you know it’s true, rayman. if i brought another sister over my place and we wanted to freak you, you would be all for it. but, if i brought some homothug brother with a twelve inch dick and told you to bend over so he could bust you out, you’d think i was crazy.”

“yeah, i hear you, that is nasty.”

“but for real, those brothers need to just be honest. i wouldn’t sleep with them, but there are sisters who will still sleep with them.”

“is it mainly cause of hiv?”

“that’s most of it, but part of it is just the thought of it all. it’s bad enough to know your man is sleeping with other women, it’s really insulting to know your man is doing other men. it would be insulting for me, anyway.”

“yeah, i guess you right.”

“so, you need to tell these brothers that if they are double dipping and butt bumping they need to just be honest about it.”

“yuch.”

“rayman, can we talk about something else?”

“sure, it’s not exactly the type of thing for a nice day like this”

“that’s what i’m saying?”

“want me to knock your back out?” i laughed.

“wha?” leni shot back, obviously caught off guard.

“wanna do it?”

“you know i do.....” leni laughed.

without a word, we got up and headed for her place.

juanita's

juanita's was a very nice jazz bar near the plaza. it was located on broadway within walking distance of the large fountains that kansas city, and the plaza, is known for. juanita's was very popular with suburban whites who drove in from up to fifty miles away to dine on some of jardine's unique salads and listen to live jazz from the remaining living performers of kansas city's jazz heydays. with their grey hair and slow strolls to the stage, these old heads could deliver play some old-school jazz. it was unrehearsed, mostly improvised, and authentic, true jazz. i loved it.

juanita's really didn't get busy until after eleven o'clock. i usually would drive down their around ten in order to get a good booth. parking in the back, and then walking down the stairs into the hallway leading to the club, i thought about how, in another hour, this now empty hallway would be so packed with loyal patrons that even air wouldn't be able to get through.

inside, jardines was fairly large, rectangular structure with a real lazy louisiana feel. the ceiling were high, white, and embossed with some kind of large circular carvings. from this ceiling hung rows of large ceiling brass ceiling fans that just seemed to slowly spend the night churning away. these fans moved so slowly that it seemed they did nothing at all. however, when it got late and the club got dark and smoky, you could actually see wisps of cigarette and cigar smoke ascend into these fans, become chopped up by the large brass blades, and then just vanish into the darkness.

along the side was one long bar with what appeared to be hundreds of bottles of liquor. from my experience, there was probably no drink the bartenders here had not mastered. in fact, they had some house drinks that were totally unique. i liked one coral blue fruity concoction called "the blue dragon" that included rum, vodka, scotch, and even a splash of imported beer. a few years ago, i had purchased one to see how i liked it and now it was usually my first choice of drink. the bar was really classy. it had thick mahogany wood with brass trim and a brass top. the stools in front of it were made of mahogany too and matched perfectly

with their red leather tops and brass tacking and trim. the rail for patrons to rest their feet was made out of brass too. when it was all polished and shined, it was just elegant.

across from the bar and along the back were booths with red leather seating and small lamps. in the core of juanita's were scores of round dining tables with white tablecloths and matching mahogany chairs. i really liked the color scheme. like everything here it just spoke of dignity and class.

a lot of suburban whites would come here to listen to jazz. a lot of upscale blacks would come too. i rarely saw any black person under the age of thirty in here and most were over forty. even though there was no official dress code, i rarely saw anyone in jeans or t-shirts. usually, most people wore slacks and some kind of dress or knit shirt. many of the men would wear suit jackets.

once i got inside, i stopped by the bar and ordered a blue dragon and then settle into a booth near the performing area. for some reason, that day i wanted to just listen to the music and feel relaxed. a lot of thoughts had been going through my mind lately and i just wanted to relax.

my mind went back to another place. my first experience with a man. a long time ago.

i drifted back over ten years. i was in college, away from home at a mostly white university located in the rural plains of western kansas. things at home had left me so hurt and angry that, even though i had scholarships to schools closer to home, i went as far away as i could. i didn't want to be anywhere my parents could drop in on me without notice. i wanted to be able to prepare for their condescending look, emanations of negative, and total lack of confidence in my ability to succeed.

my first year of college ended and i had no intentions of going home for the summer, so i signed up for an on-campus job tutoring adult learners by day. the pay was nine dollars an hour, not bad at all during that time and it covered my dormitory fees and food. it even left me with some spending cash and money to put on the next year's tuition bill.

with the campus nearly empty, the student union was only open a few hours but the gym was open until midnight every night. here were constant pickup basketball games. two half court games going constantly. that's where all the brothers and some white boys could be found evenings after six and nearly all day saturday. the games were good, the competition hot, the tempers flared occasionally, and there was always a full crowd.

the college was a fairly small one and it's facilities were kind of old. the gym itself was one of those old fieldhouse type of gyms with the real high ceiling and big square windows all around the upper perimeter. all the seats were old dark wooden bleachers with over fifty years of carvings, nicks, and dents embedded into them.

the ceiling of the gym was peppered with large round floodlights encased in big aluminum fixtures with grills of thin metal so that the bulbs would not get broken by flying objects. they were so high up, about two stories, that i couldn't imagine a ball hitting one of them, but of course anything could happen. these floodlights cast a dim yellow down on the gym during the night hours in which we played. it was a weird type of light, not really bright, but something like you would expect to see in someone's living room in the last waning hours before bedtime. in fact, to me, the light was kind of hypnotic. it was like the light caused time to stand still in some kind of timeless ocean of optical euthanasia.

at the same time, i liked the way the light would highlight the sweaty black, brown, and tan bodies that perpetually ran back and forth across the length of the gym floor, scrambling for loose balls and looking for open comrades to fire passes at. it was like the light would race across the edges of their arms, shoulders, heads, legs, and behinds and turn their bodies into some kind of stellar, superhuman beings trapped in some kind of universe saving mission. depending on how tired i was, the light would sometimes seem to freeze their bodies in the very act of motion as i watched. the shiny slick reflections of the dim yellow light bouncing off of their perspiration layered dense muscles seduced me, trapped me, made me want to stay in this place all of the time.

to be totally honest, i got as much pleasure from watching the pick up games as i did when i played. when i played, i rarely shot the ball and was content to take my time and hit the open man. so, i got picked for a lot of the later games when folks were tired and wanted a slower moving game. it worked for me. i had nothing else to do but sit there and watch. i've never been a great television fan and none of the sisters on campus appealed to me, so this worked for me.

the manager of the gym was a graduate student that we called sergeant sims. he had been in the military and was not finishing his phd thanks to the gi bill. i believe his doctoral program was in some kind of sociology related field. in any event, i do know he was done with his coursework and finishing his dissertation.

a tall, thickly muscled, cocoa skinned, clean shaven brother, sims would sit in an old desk at the end of the gym and keep an eye on everything that was going. while sitting there, he would be reading, taking notes from a book, or adding up some kind of forms. i think they had something to do with some kind of research survey he had administered and was in the process of calculating. he was a very quiet man but when he spoke everyone took note. he spoke with a calm authority, like a brother who had seen things we could not even imagine.

i think sims was in his late thirties or early forties, i once heard him mention that he had been in the army and stationed in germany, japan and even alaska. from what i remember, he was in some kind of intelligence unit and spent much of his time poring over intelligence documents and trying to evaluate the future plans and schemes of unfriendly foreign regimes.

the few sisters that were on campus and all the white girls seemed to have a thing for sims. they would come to the gym with no other business but to be in his presence. i watched them find all sorts of weird reasons to congregate around his desk and strike up conversations with them. sims was never rude to them but he never seemed to encourage conversation either. he was always cool, collected, slow to speak, and few with words. the ladies felt it was cool. so did i.

sims and i got along well. it started with the obligatory head nod thing that black men do and evolved into shake every time i would see him. i was one of the few brothers he shook hands with. most times, he just nodded. he would shake my hand when passing by.

sims was also a residence dean in a dormitory across from mine. from what i understood, he was a good one too. there were few problems and the ones that came up were solved very quickly. i think it was simply because he was mature. most of us were just young brothers away from home who didn't know much more than the fact that we were trying to graduate from college and have as much sex as we could in the meantime. sims was above all that, he didn't seem to be hung up on women or even the sports that took place in the gym where he worked. he was here on a mission and his mind was focused on that.

i remember going through a bit of a depression around july fourth. it was a three day weekend and most of the students there for the summer opted to go home and celebrate the fourth with friends. i chose to stay behind. i was still furiously angry at my parents and had no intention nor desire to see them.

soon after the weekend began, i almost regretted staying. the campus was like a ghost town. the student union and gym were completely closed. so was the library. in my dormitory, a seven story structure that normally housed about five hundred people, there were about fifteen people left. it was just plain boring.

the saturday night i went down to the gym in the dim hope that it would be open. it wasn't. i don't know why i went. i knew it wouldn't be open. i think i just wanted to see sims. i wanted to be close to him, even if being close meant sitting way across the gym, admiring him.

as i look back, i think i liked sims because he was one of the first really secure black men i had met. i wish my father had been like sims, secure and confident. sims talked to me with respect when he really didn't have to. he was a graduate student about to leave with his phd and i was some lowly sophomore still taking lower level courses. sims had been the route i was going and knew all about it. he could have treated me like shit but he didn't.

other than a few family vacations, i hadn't been far from home. sims had been all across the world. he had seen things i would never see and probably never understand.

in my eyes, sims had borne great responsibilities for his nation and did so with honor and courage. sims had served his nation and did it righteously. now, he was about to ascend the very pinnacles of higher education. i admired this man. i wanted to be like this man. he was the first black man i honestly adhered to be like.

as i turned to leave the darkened, empty gymnasium, i heard a voice shout "jackson!"

i looked around in the darkness.

"up here." came from a voice somewhere to my left.

i turned and looked to my left at the second men's dormitory. there was a muscular, shirtless, form standing stoically in the second floor window. i easily recognized that smoothly tapered torso that was silhouetted in the window.

"sargeant sims?" i inquired.

"it's me. what's up?"

"nothing. bored."

"man, i got some pizza. want some?"

"sure".

a few minutes later, i was in sergeant sim's dormitory room, sitting on an old brown leather couch and eating the last hot piece from a take out cheese pizza.

since sims was a hall resident, his dormitory room was actually two rooms that had been combined into one. one room was now a bedroom and the other room was used as sim's living room.

the wall that would normally separate the two had been torn down and replaced with one of those floor-to-ceiling bookcases so you could see through the shelves into the next room. sims had a nice collection of books on african american history, issues, and militancy. in fact, i knew some other students borrowed hard to find books from sims.

we were sitting quietly in the living room part watching some insignificant baseball game. i have no idea or interest in who was playing.

looking around, i noted that sim's place was very neat and sparsely furnished. there were no appliances, not even one of those little refrigerators. i assumed that sims ate in the cafeteria every day. however, there was a half empty bowl of fruit sitting on an old wooden desk.

besides the old couch that i was sitting on, there was an old blue recliner that sims was sitting in facing the television.

the television we were facing was one of those old, small black and white televisions that i remember having in my room as a child. it sat on a small bookshelf that was filled with some tattered textbooks on things like statistical methods, qualitative analysis, quantitative analysis, and other doctoral level topics. on top of the television slowly burned some incense sending a steady stream of smoky aroma into the air.

the incense was almost done and had made the room smell like some kind of ashy musk.

"so, young brother. how's things going?" sims asked.

"fair."

"i'm surprised you didn't bail out for the weekend like everyone else."

"naw. stayed here."

"why?"

"just didn't want to go home."

"been there, done that."

"really?"

"yep. when i was your age, i didn't want to be at home so i joined the army. i did almost fifteen years of that."

"wow"

"i never did go back home."

"never?"

"nope, never."

"you are cool with that?"

"it worked for me. i just had to find myself and stay found."

i didn't say anything. i just nodded.

"a man, especially a black man, needs to find himself." sims continued

"i've heard that before."

"yeah, most brothers come out of their homes all jacked up and we need to get away from our own homes to get unjacked up."

"that makes sense.". i had to agree with sims. it made sense for me.

"i can tell you don't have a good relationship with your parents." sims nonchalantly said as he rested his eyes directly on mine.

"wha?" that caught me completely off guard.

"for real. from that window over there..." sims motioned to the window he had called me from
"...i can see when your parents drop you off at the beginning of each semester. your dad
shakes your hand and your mom gives you a hug, but i can tell it's forced. it's like they are
mad at your for coming here."

i paused for a long time.

"i know that feeling. my father was a real jerk. beat my mom and things. had i stayed home, i
might have killed him. he didn't want me to do any better with my life either."

"why are some parents like that?"

"i don't know why, rayman. i really don't. i just know what it does to children."

"and what's that?"

"leaves you damaged. feeling that you shouldn't love yourself because they didn't love you
but at the same time feeling that if you don't learn to love yourself, you'll end up just like
them."

"yeah, i can feel that."

"black men should be able to love other black men. that's the way it should be."

"but we don't."

"slavery and racism took care of that. it's up to young brothers like you and me to teach black
men to love each other."

"man...that's a lot."

"it is, but if we don't do it – who will?"

"yeah, you right."

"when was the last time you hugged a man?"

i sat for a second, then shook my head. i could never remember hugging my father or any other man.

“see what i mean?”

“yeah.” i sighed

“rayman. do you want a hug?”.

i sat there for a minute. i don’t remember actually what i was thinking but i know it was a mix of emotions. i wanted to hug this man so badly, to just touch him but it didn’t feel right. it seemed to reek of some kind of personal violation.

before i could finish thinking, sims had risen to his feet and was standing in front of me. he was dressed only in pair of black tight shorts.

i hadn’t paid attention to his body before, but now i did. for some reason, i hadn’t previously noticed before the large bulge in his pants, but now it stood out prominently to me.

with sims standing directly in front of me, the bulge was just a few feet away from my face. i tried turning away, but kept turning back to look at it. it was if some invisible hand were twisting my head back to gaze upon sims luscious privates.

i didn’t want to stare, i didn’t want to look. i wanted to turn my head and look away or down, but i just couldn’t for myself to do it.

i closed my eyes for a second and when i did i was face to face with sims. he was now kneeling in front of me, his dark brown eyes looking deep into mine.

“it’s okay.” sims whispered as he leaned forward and embraced me.

at first i just let my arms dangle at my sides. inside, i didn’t want to raise them but deeper inside i felt i needed to. i breathed heavily and felt my arms moving up to wrap around sim’s wide, sinewy shoulders.

for a long, long time we held each other in a silent embrace. other than sim's slow and methodic breathing, i didn't hear anything else.

i know there was a baseball game on the television but i just didn't hear it anymore. maybe sims had turned the television off. i didn't know. but, for a long, long time we held each other.

i closed my eyes. i could feel sims' full lips pressing against mine. his short mustache was bristling up against my upper lip and making it tingle. i could feel sims navigating his tongue around my lips and then snaking it in between until his tongue rested on mine. i opened my mouth large to receive more of his soft, moist tongue and reciprocated with my own tongue. we were now fully engaged in kissing.

leaning back in the chair, i could feel sims lips and tongue working their way down and around my neck and throat. sims then worked his way up, sliding his tongue deep into my ear and causing my hesitant dick to become erect.

sims must have sensed that i was aroused because i could feel his hands slowly undoing my zipper.

my eyes were closed. i didn't want to open them and see this man in front of me. i didn't want to visualize myself having sex with a man. i couldn't visualize it. i must not visualize it. this was not what i wanted but it was what i craved. i had wanted to be close to this man but i wanted to be apart from him too.

soon, sim's mouth was implanted upon my erect dick. he was licking and sucking me with a slow but enthusiastic passion. sims was gentle and kind but still methodical and engaging.

slowly, he worked his mouth down the shaft of my dick and then onto my testicles.

leaning me back on the sofa, he moved his tongue to a spot in between my testicles and my anus, onto my anus, and then into my anus itself.

i arched my back in ecstasy. what sims was doing to me felt so good but it was so forbidden. i had wanted to feel this good for so long but for so long i had felt it was forbidden to feel this

good. now was justification and vindication for my pain. i could feel good. it was ok to feel good. i could embrace feeling good.

within minutes, we were nude and stretched out on his sims twin bed in the next room our bodies grinding and merging under the aura from a single blue lightbulb.

after lubricating himself, sims slowly entered me.

it was my first time. i think that sims knew that and so he was understanding and gentle. once he fully penetrated me, he moved himself in and out of me, gently rocking his body on mine.

rolling me over on my back, sims draped my legs over his shoulders and entered me again. once again, he was gentle but deep and passionate. there was nothing forceful or angry about him. it was all about acceptance, patience, embracing, and bonding.

sims was my father, my brother, my soul. sims was me. sims became me and helped me to feel myself.

laying on his stomach, sims told me it was my turn.

he groaned to me "i want you to enter me the same way i entered you".

i nodded. anything sims wanted me to do. i would do. i owed sims everything for what he had done in these few minutes.

by placing his manhood into me, sims was leading me to my own manhood. i would be a better man for what sims was doing to me and with me. i wanted to serve him, to be what he wanted me to be. i wanted to be his slave, his servant, his bitch.

guiding me to lay gently on him, sims reached back and tenderly guided my dick into him.

i will admit, i was very scared at first. i was afraid i would enter him too fast or too hard, cause pain, and turn him into some kind of raging beast. i was afraid that if i caused him pain, he would explode and tell me "you ain't shit, never was shit, and will never be shit".

however, my fears were unfounded. reaching back, he navigated my dick in and out him.

sims was so tight, so warm, and so moist. i could feel semen rushing from my testicles through my dick. this couldn't happen. i couldn't mess this up after all sims had done for me.

i tried to hold back and tightened my entire body in a vain attempt to stop the impending explosion in my groin. i attempted to lock my abdominal muscles so hard that i couldn't cum but i was unsuccessful. with a loud groan i ejaculated deep inside of sims and collapsed on his muscular back.

suddenly, i felt a floodgate of emotion rising up within me, but i tried to resist it. i fought it back as valiantly as i could. i couldn't allow myself to break down emotionally now, i just couldn't.

but finally, like the flood of semen that burst forth a few minutes before, my eyes gave way and tears flowed down my face and onto sims' back. i felt my body wracking with sobs, in fact i cried so hard i felt my dick getting erect again. soon, i ejaculated a second time sending a spurt of warm semen shooting across the back of sims leg.

the entire time he was reaching back, caressing me, touching me, rubbing me and telling me that it was going to be ok. he continued to be so caring to me, so nurturing.

in one evening, sims became the father and mother that had left me so long ago.

sims and i continued to have sex for the rest of that summer and up through his graduation the next school year.

i would be a liar if i said that it did not change me. sims taught me to be more confident and more able about myself. sims taught me manhood. sims taught me black manhood.

sims taught me how to approach people, as a man and within my manhood. sims taught me how to be a man amongst men like he was a man amongst men.

after he graduated, sims and i lost touch.

matriculating with highest honors, he secured a very good paying government job.

sims wrote once to tell me he was doing research somewhere in california. after that, i never heard from him again. i didn't even see his name listed in the college's alumni roster. i think, somehow, that he requested his name and contact information not be listed.

coach

have you ever felt that you were crying inside?

that your tear ducts were just too worn

and too broken

and too obstructed

to form a tear

and so

there were tears forming

on the inside of your eyes

and running down

the inside of your face

and dripping down

into the inside of your soul?

i feel that way

sometimes

one thing i have learned is that black people do the same freaky shit that white people do, they just lie about it and claim they don't. black women suck dick, swallow semen, lick assholes, and love for a nigga to run his dick up her ass. they just don't admit that shit in public. and niggaz love to eat pussy, toss salad, tongue kiss a woman right after he busted a nut in her mouth, and take a finger (a dildo for the ambitious brothers) up the ass.

of course they deny this shit. just ask a nigga and he gonna tell you "hell no!". but, get his ass horny enough and he will be directing you on the proper way to slide a nine inch dick shaped piece of plastic right up his rectum.

black people just tire me out with their fucking denial shit. it's not like they gonna lose their blackness if they admit they like to suck assholes or get stuck in the butt. black women act like their hair is gonna fall out if they admit the like the curl their tongue and slide it up a man's butthole. and brothers act like their dicks are gonna fall off if they admit they've tasted their own semen off the tongue of a sister.

oh well.

i had met coach neal when our school played his in a key basketball game. an older black brother, he had been coaching ball for twenty years. tall, dark, and lean he was a case study in older sophisticated coolness. he liked to wear dark suits with one of those expensive thin turtleneck sweaters. it looked good on him. with his jet black skin, it was like the suit and him synthesized into a dark black leopard on two legs.

he was a damn good coach. in the last fifteen years, he never had a losing season. he was cool and sophisticated. on the sidelines, he didn't shout and scream. he called out plays and firmly, but respectfully corrected his players when their play was slipping.

his wife was short and portly. she was light skinned and heavy on the makeup, big hair, and costume jewelry. it was quite a contrast. he with the sophisticated coolness and she with the epitome of ghetto fabulous.

after the game, a bunch of faculty members were standing outside. we were basically there as a deterrent to students who may want to engage in stupid acts of vandalism or mischief.

so, the next thing i know, coach neal is standing over there by me.

“good game, coach”

he looked as if he recognized me.

“thanks. you teach at melton high?”

“yes, been there for about twelve years”

“and your name is?”

“rayman jackson. social studies”

“lester neal”

we shook hands. he had a nice firm handshake. soft hands. long fingers.

he gave the code. i responded.

a few weeks later, we were laying in a tiny suite at some gritty motel on the far south end of prospect. it was way down there close to ninety fifth street. nestled amongst some adult bookstores and some filthy bbq joint, it was a private little spot to chill out.

i was laying there while coach was licking my balls. he was a very articulate speaker, as evidenced on local sports television. but i was finding out that speaking was just the tip of his oral skills.

naked, the brother looked like a long and lean black panther. for an older man, he had a pretty fit body. with a tinge of distinguished gray on his body hairs that seemed to catch and reflect the dim lighting in this tiny suite, he really did look like a long, lean black panther.

“where you learn to suck dick like that?”

“my wife”

i laughed. that was a good one

“at least the bitch is good for something”

i laughed even harder.

coach had been married for over two decades. they had a nice home in the grandview area of kansas city.

a lot of black educators had flooded that area in the late seventies and early eighties.

i honestly believed that coach was a happily married man. his wife was an educator also and they were a highly respected couple in the eyes of their friends, professional peers, and fellow church members.

actually, coach was one of those quiet brothers in church who was deeply influential. i had been to his church to visit a few times and i had actually observed the pastor asking coach if he felt the sermon was effective. it was interesting, mainly because coach just seemed to sit there and take it all in.

his opinion was clearly valued.

right now, it really didn't matter. through the thin walls of this cheap ass motel, i could hear cars zooming by outside.

the room smelled like old weed, cheap beer, and some generic air freshener they sprayed in after the hourly patrons left.

the sheets were stale with old blood and cum stains.

it was gritty, foul and real nasty. i mean real nasty. coach liked it like that. he liked this place. he liked the nasty stale sheets. coach liked the stained and torn beige wallpaper on the walls.

i rarely came when i was with a man. but, coach wanted me to. so, i reached down and grabbed his head and held it in place while i ejaculated in his mouth.

as i laid there, with coach's head resting on my stomach, i heard a plane roar by overhead.

i wondered where it was going.

exposure

sometimes i wonder

where do people go

not their physical bodies

but their essence

their spirit

their life

the things that make them what they are

just the other day

i was leaving the grocery store

and i saw nancy from high school

cheerleader, cute, pretty

she disappointed a lot of brothers

and made one happy

it wasn't that long ago

but now

she just looked strung out

her once pure light sable skin

was cut with wrinkles, blemishes, and sags

her eyes

that were so bright

looked so tired

and sad

and worn

she had two little children with her

that didn't look like siblings

and one in her womb

and no ring on her finger

not too long ago

i saw paul

outside the post office

we used to hang in school

*paul used to brag and boast
about all the things he was going to be
and all the fine cars he would have
and fine women
he even wore suits to high school
three piece suits
dark and pinstriped
with the matching hat
and overcoat

now
he was strung on crack
walking with a bent
like his back had been broken
he was asking people for money
his once wide smile
had now become
a sporadic field of brown, broken teeth
his lips were black, cracked, and bleeding*

his hair was patching

and

his scalp was peeling

he didn't even

recognize who i was

where did they go?

there's something almost voyeuristic about having being in an apartment, late at night, with all the lights off, and the only source of illumination coming from the screen of a computer. the light seems almost like some kind of aura that just lifts itself from the computer and lands on everything in the apartment. it's like the light just illuminated the edges of things with a single line of color. instead of a bedpost, you see a single vertical line of light in the shape of a bedpost. a windowsill becomes a horizontal band of dim blue light. a pair of buttocks or thighs becomes a single line of quaint yellow light in the *form* of a pair of buttocks or thighs.

when i sat in my apartment late at night with all the lights off and the computer on at the foot of the bed. i could turn to the window and see an inverted reflection of the screen on the window. the text and images would be backwards, but they had become so familiar i could identify them. sometimes, i wondered if people in the streets below or other apartments within viewing distance of mine could tell that i was perusing chat rooms and love boards looking for new partners. i doubt it. but, then again, i'm sure that, with my blinds wide open, they could recognize the singular, lonely form of an active computer screen in an otherwise dark and dead apartment.

i was sure that there are some people who legitimately do “work” late at night on the computer. but, i felt that most of them were just like me, looking for people wanting to hook up, get freaky, get nasty, and move on with their lives.

it was about eleven thirty on a steamy and humid kansas city night. even with the windows closed and the central air on full blast, i could feel the humidity penetrating the walls of my apartment building and giving my apartment a real sticky feel.

leni was laying on the bed, totally naked. it was obvious that she could feel the stickiness of the humidity. she was laying on the top the sheets, face down, with her legs spread as if she was trying to keep herself ventilated. by the front door was her neatly packed, pink and green gym bag with her keys and a pair of sweat shorts and tank top resting neatly on top. the next day she was driving down to wichita to visit some sorority sisters and was going to leave from my place. that was cool with me. i saw it as an opportunity for her to break me off before she booked out of town.

i hadn't been able to sleep and so i had gotten up and started my notebook p.c.. wearing my headphones, so as not to disturb leni, i had put a cd of miles davis inside. it was cool. i was digging it.

once online, i went into the chat program and entered the african american section looking for a kansas city room. there wasn't one. scouring the list, i looked for something else that may be of interest. the list of open rooms was eclectic but nothing i was interested in : genealogical studies, understanding white devils, freakmasters inc, black economic empowerment, black professionals, deep anal freaks, black lawyers, ultra hung niggaz. there were others but they were basically clones of the ones i had listed above.

i was seriously contemplating just logging off when the gray and blue box indicating a private message had appeared. it said “sonyagal invites you to private chat #3411 african american sexual issues – click on yes to accept”. i sat there and paused for a minute. this was the same room that left me feeling so pissed off the other day. i hadn't typed a word in that room

and so i guess she logged my user name and put me on her friends list. why would she do that? why me? what was the point? to hear more of her self righteous dribble and her homophobic, gay bashing core of disgruntled black heffas? in all honesty, they were probably just a bunch of angry bitches who couldn't give the pussy away. just thinking about it was making me pissed.

still, i clicked on "accept". this time, i was gonna put these fools in check. if they started that same old, "dl brothers are the devil" bullshit, i was going to bust on all of them. i was sure that once i let her know what i felt about her shit, my name was going to be immediately deleted from her friends list. she would see to that.

i turned around, leni was knocked out. for a minute, i looked at her thick black body spread out on the white sheets. the blue hue from the chat program i was accessing made her skin have the deep blue/blackish hue that sometimes you see photographers use in those modeling magazines. the hue wrapped itself around her mounded buttocks, ran down her legs and across the soles of her feet, shot back up the insides of her legs and vanished in between them. it was sexy. then again, leni was sexi. period.

turning around, i was surprised to see that sonyagal and i were the only ones in the room. it was a private chat and so it did not appear on the list. only invited people would be in there. i sat there for a minute to see what this was all about. then, sonyagal started typing.

sonyagal : evening

that was harmless enough. so, i responded.

arkelaic : hey

sonyagal : how are you?

arkelaic : fine. why did you invite me to this room?

sonyagal : i noticed your screen name the other day. it seemed you

stayed in the room a long time.

arkelaic : i see.

sonyagal : did i offend you by inviting you?

arkelaic : nope

arkelaic : you're some kind of counselor, right?

sonyagal : i work at a public health center

arkelaic : did you mean that stuff you said about "dl" brothers?

sonyagal : what stuff?

arkelaic : about them being so wrong and scandalous

sonyagal : i don't know if i put it that way.

arkelaic : well, what did you mean?

sonyagal : by what?

arkelaic : by what you were saying

sonyagal : i meant that brothers who are sleeping with men and women
have an obligation to tell the women they are having sex
with.

arkelaic : but don't you think that is private

sonyagal : yes and no

arkelaic : it's like asking a person their sexual history

sonyagal : that's exactly what it is

arkelaic : but does it matter what a person did before you met them

sonyagal : yes it does

arkelaic : i always believed that it didn't matter. it only matters
how you treat each other.

sonyagal : are you talking about serious relationships or non-
committal sexual relationships

arkelaic : i guess both

sonyagal : i think there should be a distinction

arkelaic : okay. can you explain

sonyagal : many men cannot handle knowing a woman's sexual history.
especially if it is extensive. many women cannot handle
knowing a man's sexual history. especially if it is
intensive. you can tell a person too much and cause them to
question you are today based on the person you were
yesterday.

arkelaic : i fully agree with that. if i am with a woman, even if it
was just for sex, i don't want to know about all the other
men she slept with. that just doesn't interest me.

sonyagal : in all honesty, if i got with a brother, i would not want
to know his detailed sexual history either

arkelaic : so, why do you feel these men should tell

sonyagal : hiv and aids changed the entire sexual landscape,
especially for blacks

arkelaic : what do you mean, especially for blacks?

sonyagal : i mean that black are notorious for not using protection.

arkelaic : why do you think that is?

sonyagal : in all honesty, i think it is a logical output from an
ingrained mentality of self-hate and self-destruction

arkelaic : are you a muslim or something?

sonyagal : no, i don't attend church

arkelaic : why not?

sonyagal : i just don't believe in organized religion. i think it is
manipulative and oppressive

arkelaic : aight

sonyagal : you are a man right?

arkelaic : yes

sonyagal : i think you would agree that black men do not like to wear

condoms

arkelaic : true

sonyagal : are you sexually active?

arkelaic : yes

sonyagal : do you wear condoms?

arkelaic : rarely

sonyagal : and what determines if you wear one?

arkelaic : if the female insists

sonyagal : do you have any condoms in your home?

arkelaic : nope. are you doing a survey or something?

sonyagal : lol. no, but i am leading up to a point

arkelaic : and that point is

sonyagal : my point is that black women are in a very precarious
situation when it comes to sexual relationships

arkelaic : what's that?

sonyagal : the primary way in which black women get hiv and aids is
from unprotected sex with black men

arkelaic : i can believe that.

sonyagal : i'm not talking about the stereotypical teenage "slut" or

“hoe”. i’m talking about mature, grown women with careers and sometimes children. they have sexual urges just like men but hiv has made the sexual scenario very unfair for heterosexual black women.

arkelaic : unfair?

sonyagal : yes, unfair

arkelaic : how is it unfair?

sonyagal : do you really want me to explain?

arkelaic : i’m waiting

sonyagal : men rarely get hiv from women. men usually get it from other men or needles. most hiv positive black men contracted it from another man. even if a man is having unprotected sex with a hiv positive female, his chances of contracting it are very slim. for heterosexual black men, they have a lot of latitude.

arkelaic : okay, i can agree with that

sonyagal : but, heterosexual black women are getting hiv primarily from black men and at an alarmingly fast rate. heterosexual black women do not have as much latitude. because the

chances of a man getting hiv from a woman are so slim
compared to the chances of a woman getting from a man, it
is imperative that woman know if her man is/was having sex
with other men.

arkelaic : i have to admit, you do have a good point. but, let's be
real

sonyagal : real about what?

arkelaic : if a brother tell a sister that he has been with other men,
he getting dismissed. ain't no sister gonna put up with
that

sonyagal : i agree. but i still think these men need to tell

arkelaic : and the ones who don't tell?

sonyagal : the ones who don't tell are dl, downlow, in more ways than
one

arkelaic : that's hard. it's like you judging them.

sonyagal : maybe i am. sometimes we need to judge. if we don't judge
and evaluate, how can we change?

arkelaic : once again, i agree with you.

sonyagal : let me tell you something

arkelaic : what's that?

sonyagal : i've had this job for eight years.

arkelaic : that's good

sonyagal : in those eight years, i've had to look into the faces of
young black women who just found out they were hiv
positive.

arkelaic : damn

sonyagal : too many faces. way too many faces.

arkelaic : sad

sonyagal : from ages thirteen to forty five. students, teachers,
lawyers, police officers, social workers, mothers,
housewives, ministers, doctors. sisters who's entire
futures have just been snatched from them because some
brother hid the truth about his life.

arkelaic : can't they press charges against the men who infected them?

sonyagal : only if he knew he was positive. black men have the same
aversion to going to the doctor as they do to wearing
condoms. they will only do it if they have no other choice.

arkelaic : girl, you hard. but you righteous

sonyagal : i hope you are taking this serious

arkelaic : i'm taking you serious. it's just hard.

sonyagal : i've seen brothers come into the clinic, obviously in the late stages of aids. barely able to walk, half blind, covered with sores and they still had never been tested. go figure.

arkelaic : damn. geeze

sonyagal : this is real. it is completely real and people are just fooling themselves by jumping from bed to bed without any protection or real knowledge of who they are sleeping with.

arkelaic : i hear you. it's just so hard.

sonyagal : well, if it's hard to you...

arkelaic : yes

sonyagal : how hard do you think it is on the mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters of the black women who died from aids. what did they die for? an orgasm? love?

arkelaic : that's true.

sonyagal : it's devastatingly true. just last month, a sixteen year old black girl here committed suicide just two weeks after

her mother died from aids. she was so broken up that she
couldn't handle it. an honor student, she had a full
scholarship to the university waiting for her.

arkelaic : sad

sonyagal : sometimes we do follow ups with the families of people who
died from aids and regardless of what you think, most of
them never get over it. they are deeply wounded for life.

arkelaic : wow. that's rough.

sonyagal : can i ask you a question?

arkelaic : sure

sonyagal : i know you sleep with women. are you in a relationship?

arkelaic : no

sonyagal : so you are just having casual sex with women

arkelaic : i like the term "noncommittal" sex

sonyagal : okay, i agree. there is a difference

arkelaic : i think so

sonyagal : do you discuss your sexual history with them?

arkelaic : no

sonyagal : why?

arkelaic : they never ask

sonyagal : ok. another question

arkelaic : go ahead

sonyagal : have you had sex with men in the past five years?

arkelaic : yes

sonyagal : how many?

arkelaic : not sure

sonyagal : can you give a ballpark figure?

arkelaic : okay, i would say at least twenty

sonyagal : okay.

arkelaic : that's a lot isn't it?

sonyagal : "a lot" is relative. to some people, five partners in ten years is a lot. to some people ten partners in two month is not a lot. do you think it's a lot.

arkelaic : sometimes

sonyagal : did you wear condoms when you had sex with these men?

arkelaic : no

sonyagal : so you engaged in high risk behavior

arkelaic : i agree

sonyagal : so, why didn't you wear condoms

arkelaic : they didn't ask me to

sonyagal : did you ever think about the possibility of hiv infection?

arkelaic : sometimes

sonyagal : okay, are you having sex with men now?

arkelaic : yes

sonyagal : and women?

arkelaic : yes

sonyagal : are you using condoms?

arkelaic : no

sonyagal : when was the last time you had sex with a man?

arkelaic : yesterday

"you motherfucking bastard!" suddenly reverberated through my apartment. these words blasted through my headphones and sliced through the smooth strains of the jazz cd that i was listening to and implanted themselves into my head. it startled me so much that i jerked my arm and knocked over short, thick glass of ice water i had sitting on the right edge of the computer table. i could feel the cold water and ice cubes hit the floor and splash onto my barefeet.

as i turned around, i could see leni storming towards the front door and her bag. she was still stark naked and the eerie blue hue from the computer screen still made her appear as some kind of living, breathing blue-black apparition in my loft.

“you son of a bitch! you fucking faggot! you’re fucking men - you piece of shit”, she turned around and shrieked at me as she fumbled at the front lock. it was pretty clear she was leaving. i wondered if she was going to leave my place completely naked because that is what she looked like she was preparing to do.

she stopped and began jerking her clothing off the top of her gym bag that was resting the door. “i don’t believe this shit. and don’t tell me you were joking, motherfucker. i was standing over your shoulder for a good twenty minutes”. she continued to shout at me as she began pulling on her shorts and her shirt.

i was frozen, speechless. there was nothing i could say. in fact, it was happening so fast, i didn’t think i would have opened my mouth even if i did have something to say. i glanced back at the screen. sonyagal was still typing but i couldn’t focus to see what she was typing. i turned back to leni, she was clothed, though slovenly and with her bag over her shoulder and her keys in her hand. she had the door open. soft light from the hallway filled the apartment. it silhouetted the side of her body as she stood in the doorway, holding it open.

for a brief second that seemed like a few minutes, she just stood there and glared at me.

leni’s eyes were unbelievably wide open and glaring with pure fanatical rage. her face was contorted and twisted in grotesque expression of pure anger that i had never, ever seen from a woman since my mother’s battles with schizophrenia. eerily, it was frightening and amusing at the same time. in a way, i felt as if i were trapped in some type of dysfunctional black melodrama watching the plot unfold before me. eerily, in another way, i felt as if i were watching some kind of bizarre animation depicting some uncanny explosion of personal fury.

leni was standing with her feet spread almost as if she were ready to launch herself forward and brutally assault me. in the momentary silence, i could hear her breathing from across the apartment. her breathing was deep, fast, methodical, and shallow.

in all honesty, i think leni was seriously considering murdering me.

the front door was right by the kitchen. a few feet from leni was a drawer full of sharp gleaming knives of all sizes. i wondered for a brief minute if she was going to lunge into the kitchen and grab one.

but, suddenly, leni abruptly threw open the front door of my apartment. she threw it open with so much force that i could hear it slam back against the outside wall, punching a doorknob sized hole into the sheetrock.

with her body continuing to face me, she arrogantly turned her head. "the man in apartment 965 is a fucking faggot. he fucks men!" she boomed as she extended her head into the dead, empty hallway. i could actually hear her voice reverberating up and down vacant corridor.

then, she jerked the door. it slammed shut, firing a quick gust of air across the apartment and causing the very doorframe to shake.

i sat there immobile, still frozen in my seat. i could still feel the cold icy water from my toppled glass flowing across the hardwood floor under my bare feet.

i did not know to expect from this rabid, raging typhoon of black female wrath. the same river of fiery aggression and rampant passion that she exhibited just hours ago in my bed a few feet away had mutated into a hostile, antagonistic ocean of fury that had the capability to obliterate my existence. i was praying to jesus almighty that she didn't have a pistol in her bag or i might be one dead motherfucker.

with the door closed, the apartment got dark again. i felt like turning on a light but i was leery of rising to my feet. leni was all the way pissed and clearly angry to the point of irrational behavior. these are the situations where people get stabbed or beaten to death.

leni's voice became a slow, methodic, monotone. barely able to hold back the pure wrath and vindictive anger that was swirling within her, she spoke.

“you motherfucking, goddam, black faggot son of a bitch. you are one scandalous piece of shit.”

she paused as if she were trying to find a way to phrase her final words.

“listen. you don’t play me - you bitch ass nigger. i don’t get played. everyone that knows you, i’m gonna tell them about this shit. i am going to tell everyone about your lowdown, trifling, ignorant, black faggot ass. i’m going to tell dwight, sherry, sarah, wendall, trisha, terry. nigga, i am going to tell the whole fucking city.

don’t you ever call me again, you sorry ass black motherfucker!”

she opened the door and stalked out, slamming it one last time behind her.

i sat there, still stunned, still in shock, and somehow numbed from it all.

i closed my eyes and tried to just gather my thoughts. while they were closed, the battery on my notebook computer ran out of juice and the computer shut down.

when i opened my eyes, my apartment was pitch black and silent.

richard

*i remember the summer
my mother died from cancer
the hospice people
had given us a hospital bed
and a nurse that came over daily*

*so we
turned one of the bedrooms
into a room for my mother*

*the cancer in her abdomen
caused her entire belly to swell*

*like that of
a
pregnant woman
in fact
one day they drained*

nearly eight units

of

fluid

from her

but

within a few hours

she was full

of fluid again

looking at her laying there

her head

stripped naked

her body

stripped down

nearly

to bones

i felt as if

my entire soul

were trapped

*in some kind
of inner paradox*

*i had spent
so much of my life
trying to get away*

*but now
i was eerily drawn
back to the memories*

the bitter ones

the visions

the voices

the hallucinations

the fits

and the

rage

the arguments with

those invisible

shadowy figures

why was i drawn here?

i had no

real idea

as to why

i was drawn to this place

and to the memories

and somehow

i was pushed away

far far away

near the end

after the

preacher came

by

something changed

and for the first time

in my entire memory

of her

we spoke

without the anger

and the rage

and the frustration

and the paranoia

and the suspicions

we talked about life

and death

about god

and love

and

she died

on an august morning

my father, brother, and i

were there

after she took her last

breath

we sat there

for a long

long

long

time

then someone

called the hospital

and they came

and took her away

my brother richard, his wife claranna, and their three children shared a really nice eclectic looking home in the midtown section of kansas city. even though i daily passed fairly close to their home on my way to work during the school year, i rarely stopped in to see them. we simply were not very close. of course, i saw richard and his family on the holidays like thanksgiving, christmas, memorial day, and the fourth of july.

however, when i did come by it was more or less out of a sense of duty and not any real sense of family bonding. our conversations would be on superficial and nonthreatening topics such as current events, the economy, sports, and our jobs. to be honest, we rarely even talked about his wife and children or any of the significant people in my life. richard had no real idea who or what i did when i was not working. that was good. he didn't need to.

my brother had a really stable job in maintenance at the airport. he had dropped out of college, despite having taken out substantial loans. in fact, when richard did drop out, he refused to pay back some personal loans my father had taken to help him out. it wounded him and richard showed no remorse for this.

actually, he never ever offered to repay my parents for those loans. it bothered me, but in a way i felt that our environment had contributed to the situation. so, even though i thought about it from time to time, i tried not to judge him in light of it.

richard and claranna had produced three handsome boys. terrence was now fifteen, anthony was twelve, and the harlin was ten. like richard, they were all lean, tall, big boned, and medium toned. terrence and anthony were on the basketball teams at their respective high schools. harlin was more into science and routinely had projects in the city science fair.

i think claranna had more to do with the boys having motivation than richard. claranna had finished college and was working as some kind of case manager at the child support collection office. a short, full figured sister with rich dark skin and a short neat afro, claranna was the consummate go-getter type. she was the one that really pushed richard towards getting married, buying this house, and starting some serious investing. i liked that about claranna. rather than talk down richard and treat him like some kind of unmotivated, continually slipping brother – she actually encouraged him and loved to tell others how well richard was succeeding in the things he was doing. claranna was really good for richard.

once in awhile, claranna would ask how i was doing in the romance department and i would just blow her off with “i'm just dating around.” and let it go. she would offer to introduce me to co-workers and friends, but i politely declined. i knew that, considering the lifestyle i was

living, that was just a little too close for comfort. i really didn't need to have my dirt coming back to me through claranna.

on this particular lazy sunday afternoon, claranna had called my place and had invited me over. she was barbecuing some chicken legs for richard and the boys and she felt that i might like to have some. given the fact that i lived alone, free meals were always welcomed. so, i accepted the invitation.

richard and claranna's two story bungalow type home was made of wood but painted a nice brick red with cream trim. in the back, it had a really neat gray concrete patio that looked onto a long and narrow backyard. their backyard was just like their house, nice and neat with a country feel.

richard and i were leaning back in some nice, aluminum lawn recliners on the patio sipping on some kind of drink made with strawberry extract and rum. claranna was going back and forth between the kitchen and the patio, monitoring the barbeque and seasoning some side dishes she had made to go along with it. the boys were down in the recreation room drinking sodas and playing video games on a big screen television. occasionally, we would hear one of them shout or yell when they struck an impressive kill or evaded some kind of video monsters.

as typical, richard and i were not talking about anything of real significance. we discussed the next year's presidential elections, the local controversy over some kind of tax increase, and predictions for basketball season. in a way, i guess you could say we were involved in "man chat" but in another way the fact that we were brothers yet our conversations never went deeper than this level was quiet sad.

i looked at richard as he sat there, content and satisfied, slipping on his drink and wondered for a brief moment why it seemed that the things that went on in our home never seemed to discourage or depress him. from what i remembered, richard got more angry over things and i got more hurt. when our mother would go through her violent and antagonistic episode, richard would storm out and return, still seething with rage, hours later. i would stay in the house and bear the brunt of the event.

then again, some say anger is a reaction to pain and so it is possible that he simply expressed his pain with anger. maybe richard's pain was so intense that his storming out was his way of dealing with it.

but, just as our reactions were dramatically different then, our lives were dramatically different now.

like most people, richard had went through a devastating breakup in his early twenties. he was dating this young lady named jacie who was studying to be an electronic engineer. richard dated her his last three years of college.

i honestly thought richard was going to marry jacie. jacie was cute, pretty, and intelligent. she came from a good blue collar family and she seemed ambitious and quite level headed. jacie didn't spend large sums of money on fancy clothes and she didn't seem to be impressed with cars and cash, like a lot of other young sisters.

however, upon graduation, jacie promptly dumped richard and began dating a brother who was on his way to medical school. from what i understand, it was quite abrupt and unexpected and jacie gave richard no opportunity to even talk it over with her. jacie basically told him "it's over, don't call me anymore".

a few months later, richard met claranna at a party, brought her by the house to meet us and things moved quickly towards marriage from there.

unlike richard, other than prolonged sex based relationships, i had never been in any kind of relationship lasting longer than a few months. that was my dating history. i'm sure that if i thought long enough, i could draw some kind relationship from my lack of relationships to the way things had went in my childhood. but i hadn't really thought on it. i just assumed that i would probably never get married and that was that.

after the small talk, richard and i sat in silence for a few minutes. finally, i decided to step out and see if richard and i could talk about the pain we both had held for so long.

“richard, do you ever think about things?” i asked.

“what things?”

“like growing up. when mama was sick and all that?”

richard paused and looked down at the drink in his hand.

“i used to but i hardly think about it anymore.” he responded.

“really?”

“yep. i just don’t have the time to focus on it.”

“with your wife and children and all?”

“...and my job and paying off this house and trying to go back to school.”

“you’re going back to school?” i asked.

i was glad to hear richard was going back to school. he was very bright and i knew he could do more than he was doing.

“in the fall probably.” richard answered.

“what are you going to study?”

“something where i help people”

“like what?”

“nursing or social work or something.”

“that sounds good.”

i could sense that we were to start another career conversation. i wanted us to talk about our childhood, just this once. we may never do it again. but this one time, that was what i wanted.

“so, if you weren’t so busy, do you think you would think about it.” i probed.

“maybe. i think that thinking patterns change over time too. so, if i suddenly wasn’t so busy, i probably still wouldn’t think about it.”

“i can understand that.”

“i can tell you think about it a lot.” richard said with hushed voice.

“how can you tell that?”

“they way you look when something about growing up enters the discussion. a sad look in your face, in your eyes. even when you smile and laugh – you look sad.”

“really? i didn’t know i looked like that.”

“you do look like that – a lot.”

“wow. that’s deep.”

“do you want to know what i really think?”

“yes, i do.”

“i think that things at home were really backwards and you got hurt the most in it all. you were the baby of the family, the one everyone is supposed to protect. instead, you became the one everyone dumped on because you heart was tender at you didn’t lash back.”

“maybe.”

i could feel that richard had thought about this at times. these were not thoughts just springing out of nowhere.

“all children all different. my three sons are different. terrence and anthony are more aggressive, harlin is more passive. i told terrence and anthony that if they see their little brother getting bullied, step in and defend him because harlin wouldn’t defend himself.” richard continued.

“well, harlin doesn’t seem as assertive as terrence and anthony.

he isn’t. harlin’s more laid back. if something is wrong at school, he won’t tell us. we have to get it out of him.” he concluded and then took a sip from his drink.

“hmmmmm.” i hummed in response.

“you were like harlin. you weren’t deep into sports or roughhousing. you liked science and reading and shit like that.”

“true, that was me.”

“when mama would go off, i would just get up and leave. i didn’t want to be there. i didn’t want to see it. to be honest, i should have taken you with me. for a long time, i felt bad about that. but i really didn’t understand what was going on.”

“yeah, well, i can see that.”

“i had to forgive myself for that.”

“really?”

“yes. for a long time i felt like i wasn’t much a big brother to you. i was supposed to protect you from shit – not just leave you in it.”

“i never thought of it that way.”

“is that why you’re not seeing anyone?”

“what?”

“because of all that shit that happen? did it leave you jaded about relationships?”

“sometimes i wonder.”

“i mean, i know you have women. i remember that one woman that your brought with you a few months ago. what was her name? she was nice.”

“oh, leni. it might have been leni.”

“didn’t you have an african girlfriend for a minute?”

“well, we weren’t really dating?”

“what was that like?”

“it was cool. we still hang out, but we’re not dating or anything.” i answered, trying to discreet and now voyage into another sexual discussion.

richard laughed and looked back over his shoulder, through the sliding screen doors, at his wife inside the kitchen.

leaning forward and lowering his voice he said “i know how that is. i was in some of those ‘we aren’t really dating’ relationships. i know how they work.”

i laughed

“but for real, rayman, let me tell you something.”

“when claranna and i first got married, we had to go to counseling as a couple. and i had to go to counseling on my own.”

“for what?”

“my head was all messed up from everything that happened. living with a schizophrenic parent and another parent who doesn’t know what to do about it affects everyone in the home. you can’t deny that. it affected me and i’m sure it affected you.”

“yeah, i think so too.” i responded.

“if i hadn’t went to counseling, i don’t know if we’d still be together today. i just had major problems with allowing myself to be open, honest, and vulnerable.”

“why was that?”

“because, with mama, we couldn’t be open and honest. we couldn’t do the things that children are supposed to do like freely hug their parents or sit on their laps. did you know i don’t have a single memory of sitting on mama’s lap or telling her that i loved her?” richard said, his voice wavering with emotion.

“i don’t think i do either.”

“and it wasn’t her fault?”

“you don’t think so?”

“no, she was mentally ill. she should have been on medication. unfortunately, we grew up in a home and with a family that frowned on treatment for mental problems. they just wrote you off as crazy and ignored you.”

“was it just our house?”

“hell rayman, most black folks still frown on people who see counselors or take antidepressants. there is a big stigma against mental health care in the black community.”

“no, it wasn’t. aunt georgia and aunt carol had the same problems. i don’t know if they were as bad as mama, but they had the same problems.” richard explained.

“how did you know this?” i asked in stunned amazement.

“when we had mama’s funeral and everyone was at the house eating, i was on the front porch and marlon and kenny and some others were talking about it. aunt georgia eventually had to spend some time in an institution and aunt carol did too.”

“so, it was like a family thing?”

“well, some mental illness can be hereditary. that’s why i say it’s not anyone’s fault.”

“you know, to be honest, i still feel so angry about it all sometimes.” i confessed.

“and that is probably keeping you from being really involved in relationships. i was angry when i first got married and so, other than sex, i really wasn’t intimate with claranna.”

“that’s deep.” i replied, looking back into the house to make sure claranna was not within earshot.

“yes, it is deep. a lot of brothers are not intimate with the women in their lives. i was just one of them. but, i wanted to have a good marriage, so i did what i had to do.”

“do you think i should see a counselor?”

“considering the way things were growing up? yes. no doubt.”

“maybe i’ll do that.”

“or at least be conscious of how things at home may be affecting you now.”

“true. i agree with you there.”

“you know one thing i found out is that many brothers who are emotionally absent or have intimacy issues feel the only way they can relate to women is on a sexual level.”

“wow” i responded. i was still stunned at the depth of richard’s reflections on this.

“yeah, it was in this class the counselor recommended we attend on intimacy issues.”

“so, is it just women they can only relate to in sexual terms?”

richard cocked his head back as if to say “what the fuck?”. a look of concerned amusement crossed his face. shaking his head, he took a sip from his drink and then leaned back.

“what you mean, bruh?” richard asked with a look of concern on his face.

“oh, i’m just asking. it’s just an interesting observation. that’s all.” i explained.

“oh ok. i was staring to wonder...well, to be honest, they did say in class that in some cases men with intimacy issues explore homosexuality simply because they feel they can only relate to other people in sexual terms.”

“wow, that’s really deep.” i replied in faux amazement.

“a lot of people from dysfunctional homes where their parents did not affirm their worth as people will use sex to find affirmation. and, this can include gay sex as well as straight sex.”

“deep.”

“man, some people go through entire marriages and lives seeking the affirmation they never got from home. this shit is real.”

“it sounds real.”

“i think it’s worse with brothers because society doesn’t do a lot to affirm black men. combine that with a dysfunctional home and you can have a person who’s entire life and existence rotates around seeking affirmation through sex, jobs, money...whatever.” richard stopped to take a sip from his drink and then continued.

“man, you are over thirty years old and you’ve never had a real relationship. it’s time to move on. before long, you’ll be forty and then fifty and then you’ll look back and be asking “where did it go?”

richard paused for a moment. he turned and looked down the length of his backyard.

“i didn’t want to end up a miserable old man so i got my shit together. people have to do what saves their own lives.”

claranna stuck her head out onto the patio.

“food’s ready!”, she shouted “rayman, you can wash your hands down the hall. there’s some towels in the bathroom closet!”

“let’s talk more about this sometime.”, richard said as he got up, briefly touched my shoulder, and headed for the kitchen.

i got up and followed richard to the kitchen. i knew that i needed to talk more on this, but i didn’t know if i had the courage to do it.

the e-mail

i remember

when my father was near

the end

he was in a nursing home

with cancer

and dementia

he no longer knew

who i was

or even who

he was

sometimes

he thought

i was his father

other times

he thought

i was

his brother

still other times

he thought

i was some long deceased

relative

from years past

on sunday afternoons

i would sit with him

for hours

upon hours

his glassy eyes

affixed on the television screen

he said nothing

did nothing

he just

layed there

to : leni

from : leni

cc : rayman, terrence, richard, peter, etc

subject : in case you know rayman jackson

in case you know rayman jackson or know of any individuals who have dealings with, please be informed that he is bisexual. a few days ago, i spent the night with rayman and busted him in an internet chat room telling people how he had slept with so many men that he couldn't even remember the number. he doesn't wear condoms and might have hiv or aids.

from the cc line you will see that i have sent a copy of this to rayman himself. i'm not afraid of him trying to sue me because he knows and i know that this is entirely true.

if you want my phone number and want to talk to me about it, just reply.

leni

i sat there for a long time looking at the e-mail i had just opened. it had been sitting in my inbox for the last few days. ever since leni had stormed out, i hadn't been back on the internet and so i had no idea that his mail was in my box.

actually, i wasn't even at home. after the conversation with my brother, i decided to look more into some kind of counseling for my issues. i knew i had them and they were controlling my life, my sexuality, my relationships with others, and i was becoming a very "ungood" person. besides, i had very good insurance through my job and i believed there were no

copays or deductibles on mental health treatment. i would be a fool not to pursue the help that i was realizing that i needed.

so, i had been at the library, perusing the shelves and periodicals looking for articles and information that might help me as i sought out choices. after a few hours, i had logged into one of the library computers and checked my e-mail. i knew leni was going to probably do something, but i had no idea it would be this damning. she was putting my business all the way out on front street. it was just plain vicious.

okay, in a way, i understood her rage. even though i had spent a lot of time and energy rationalizing my behavior, not telling her about my sexual history with me was just plain wrong. she had a right to know that one part. especially since i was engaging in high risk sexual activities with her and the other people i was sleeping with.

on the other hand, she hadn't been exactly wide open about her sexual history. she never used protection with me, and so i felt i could safely assume she wasn't using protection with others. in addition to that, what kind of men had she been sleeping with? if she had been sleeping with men who had spent some time in prison or in "the life" it's very possible that she may have had second or third hand contact with an hiv positive man. so, while she was pissed off, she wasn't totally innocent either.

at the same time, i was realizing more and more that i could not use the lives of others as some kind of justification for my own pathetic irresponsible behavior. i couldn't use my mother's mental illness and my father's emotional exodus from our home as a justification for my failure to be considerate of the feelings of others in my life. my mother had been dead for several years and my father for a few, so they had nothing to do with the life i was living. i was making my choices. choices that were hurting other people.

as i sat there in the plush solace of the library, i leaned back and took a deep breath. even i realized that this was a defining moment for me. if i responded back to everyone with a denial of what leni was saying, i was just descending back into the same bullshit that i was trying to get out of. if i ignored it, folks may assume that it was true, in full or in part. then again, maybe i had an obligation to confirm what leni was saying. i had slept with some of the

people she had sent this mail to and had slept with friends of others that had gotten the mail. maybe they should know what i had been doing.

then again, maybe that was a little too much. i considered whether a “from this day forward” approach would be best. it may be best to just let these old relationships go and let them leave thinking what they wanted to think. sometimes you have to do that, just cut the strings and move forward.

i closed the mail and returned to my inbox. already people were using the “respond to all” function to ask questions to everyone who got the e-mail. there were over twenty responses and this initial e-mail was evolving into some kind of sick progressive discussions on my sexual life and history. i decided to read and see what they thought.

“is this a joke? where’s the punch line?”

“leni, are you serious? call me.”

“did rayman get a copy of this mail?”

“i always thought his ass was suspect!”

“oh my god! he’s fucking men?”

“rayman – are you going to respond to this mail?”

“can’t he sue you for this?”

“if this shit is true. he’s one sick motherfucker”

“he slept with one of my sorors. i’m going to tell her.”

“so, was he telling these women he’s straight?”

“from what i understand, that’s what leni was saying”

“she sounds scorned to me. maybe he just had a small dick or something.”

“i know leni, she wouldn’t lie about something like this.”

“she didn’t need to bust him out like this.”

“maybe she’s just trying to warn people.”

i logged off from the computer. for several minutes, i sat there while the sheer enormity of all just swirled in my mind. i had to make a decision. there was really no way i could fight this, leni was above reproach. so, in all honesty, i might as well just write off all those people who received the e-mail. they were mainly acquaintances and friends, not family or even dear friends.

besides, i had been coming to a point where i needed to make positive change. my entire life was vanishing into some kind of dysfunctional abyss that started when i was a child and continued to grow as my actions continued to feed it. like some kind of cancer, it was consuming my entire existence. i was just moving from body to body, bed to bed, sexual partner to partner.

i realized that i was running from something and to something at the same time. in a way, i was running from my pain and in a way, i was running to my pain. i was feeding on and letting it feed on me at the same time. i was attempting to extract myself from it and embracing it at the same time. while attempting to navigate myself away from the tentacles of my broken soul, i was only succeeding in entrapping myself further.

i was so deeply embedded into this morass that i knew there would be some pain involved in change. there was simply no way i could ascend out of what i was into without feeling some discomfort. i would lose something to gain what i needed. there would be some lonely times and some painful times. this was not going to be some kind of fairytale story that ended somewhere over the rainbow.

but, i had to do it. i couldn’t turn back. richard was right, i needed some help. sonyagal was right, i needed to be open and honest with the women i was sleeping with. (white woman) was right, some of my sexual choices had to do with my own orientation as well as my

surroundings.. i had to confront my own sexual orientation even as i confronted my own sexuality. and, leni was right too. i was a scandalous motherfucker. the shit i was doing was just plain foul. my life was foul. i was living a lie and was making arbitrary choices for other people's lives without their permission.

i had to challenge my own life. i had to take it on headfirst and see it for what it was. then i had to wrestle with it and subdue it until it was what i believed it should be.

i logged off from the computer and went home. as soon as i walked into my loft, i erased all stored numbers on my caller id, held down the erase button to erase all messages on my answering machine, and then i called the phone company and changed my number.

i was on the run.

the phone call

in the summertime, as the darkness of the night flows like ink from a broken well over the city, a type of resurrection and ascension seems to take place. as a child, it mystified and enchanted me. now, even as an adult, i often liked to watch this nightly ritual and reminisce over times past and the memories these times left implanted in my mind.

as the skies change from dark blue to black, the stars begin to show, and the streetlights come on, thousands of tiny fireflies wake up from their daily slumbers and rise from within their safe confines deep within the blades of grass. they ascend up, their bellies illuminating on and off, and seem to congregate in tiny flocks before making their way to other areas.

when i was a child, i used run through my backyard and capture some of these fireflies in a thick, old jelly jar. when it was time to go to bed, i would set them at the foot of my bed. i would drift off to sleep watching their tiny lights go on and off as they adhered themselves to the glass sides of the jar.

the next morning, when i would arise, these same fireflies that created a mystical constellation of light the night before were now dormant and darkened. i would take the jar out and pour them into the backyard and watch them sluggishly scurry away into the foliage.

i was sitting in my car, a few blocks down from baldwin's watching this nightly ritual of resurrected fireflies rising from the yards up and down the quickly darkening street and contemplating what had transpired a few minutes ago.

stopping by baldwin's for a quick drink and some relaxation, i had made my way to the front door as i normally did. after the door attendant had asked the question, i had given the password. i expected the door to open immediately. instead, there was a pause of several minutes and some muttering behind the door.

finally the massive beveled glass door cracked open about two inches and melvin himself was standing there behind it.

“you need to talk to robert.” melvin told me.

“what?” i replied.

“you need to talk to robert.”. he repeated.

for a minute i paused. i hadn't talked to robert in a few weeks. in fact, i had been avoiding him. i was really trying to detach myself from him so that i could clear my thoughts. at the same time, i knew that he had received a copy of leni's e-mail and i really didn't want to answer any questions he had about. because robert had introduced me to leni, i wouldn't have been surprised if leni had called him to complain about how scandalous and trifling she considered me to be.

“okay, i'll call him when i leave.” i told melvin.

“rayman..” melvin spoke slowly and methodically, and with some kind of restraint, as if he was trying to drive home some kind of implied statement

“you need to talk to robert.” he finished.

then he closed the door.

a few minutes, i was sitting back in my car. i really didn't want to call robert. to be honest, i really didn't want to ever see him again. it was true that robert and i had a history together but now i wanted to let things go.

at the same time, i felt an obligation to call robert. it was true that robert had introduced me to leni and some other fine people. he also had gotten me on the admission list at baldwin's. robert had a been a good friend.

it was obvious that i would not be allowed into baldwin's until i heard whatever robert had to tell me. that bothered me. i liked baldwin's if for nothing more than just relaxation. if there were some way i could get back on the admission list by simply hearing this brother out, it would be worth it.

after sitting for ten more minutes thinking it over, i got out my cellphone and called robert. i started to block my number, since i had changed it. however, i knew robert didn't answer blocked calls.

"yeah." robert's gruff voice answered on the other end.

"it's rayman."

there was a long pause. robert was breathing slow and heavy like he did when he was really irritated or getting upset.

"you need to talk to your girl." robert finally said.

"who?"

"you know who."

"who?"

"rayman, don't play with me, you know who.". robert said with a hushed angry voice.

i assumed his wife must have been home and he was struggling with his building fury while trying to keep his volume down.

"leni." i said.

"yeah, bruh, leni."

"i got the email."

"i know you did."

"she called me." robert said.

"really?"

"she asked me what kind of brothers do i hang around."

"what did you tell her."

"i told her there must be some misunderstanding."

"what did she say?"

"i don't know if she bought it."

"what do you want me to do?"

"man, it's not leni that i'm worried about. did you know that e-mail is being forwarded around?"

"what?".

i hadn't checked my email and had no idea that this email was now being circulated around.

"rayman, you got to understand, this is bigger than just you." robert continued. he was cooling off now and being more methodical.

"ok."

"okay, if you are outed, then it casts light on everyone you hang around. i can deal with it personally cause i got safa and i'll just say we are old fraternity brothers. but what if someone sees you going in and out of baldwin's? i'm not saying anyone is gonna be ruined cause of it but these kinds of things can get out of control."

"robert, don't you think you're overdoing it?"

“no, i don’t think i’m overdoing it. this woman’s e-mail is going around through everyone who knows you, including people who know that you and i go way back and others who know you through me.”

“ok. i hear you. i hear you.”

“remember that cutie from the party that you took home? i think her name was renee.”

“yes”

“man, she heard wind of it and called dedron and dedron called me. he said he couldn’t find you.”

“okay.”

“rayman...”

“okay. what do you want me to do?”

“rayman, the way i figure it is that you can just tell leni that you were online playing around and she misunderstood. she may buy that. or send a reply e-mail and say she’s scorned or something. you have to either make her rethink what she said or discredit her.”

i sat back in my car and just looked around for a few minutes. down the street, a cab pulled up in front of baldwin’s and two shadowy figures exited, went up to baldwin’s and soon vanished inside the club.

sometimes, the more discreet brothers would do that. they would park their car outside a jazz club or pool club somewhere and then take a cab to baldwin’s. that was a smart move to keep from being outted.

“rayman, do you hear me?” robert said on the other end. i must have drifted off for a second.

“yeah. i hear you.”

“and.”

“and what?”

“what are you going to do rayman jackson?”

“i don’t know?”

“don’t know? brother, i don’t think you have options. you got to make her retract it or deny it openly.”

“but, won’t denying it make me look guilty?”

“depends on how you do it. if you got that route, don’t attack her, just write an e-mail and say that she got her feelings hurt and you feel bad that she had to resort to this. don’t demonize leni, just nicely tell folks that she’s lying.”

“but she’s not lying.”

“yeah, and you were stupid for talking that crap on a computer with her laying five feet away.”

“robert, i thought she was asleep.”

i could hear robert chuckle on the other end. he was lightening up.

“rayman, what have i always told you?” robert said with a quiet laugh.

“what’s that?”

“women never sleep. they up all night plotting ways to make you want to go upside their heads.”

we both laughed. i needed that laugh.

however, as i laughed, i felt nervous. i didn’t want to discredit leni or lie to her. if i lied to her and told he i was playing, she would feel so bad for having sent that e-mail out.

it wasn't that i agreed with leni sending the email out, but i didn't want to make her feel that she destroyed someone's reputation over a simple misunderstanding. that wasn't right. in all honesty, i felt that either i should come completely clean with her or just not say anything.

"so, brother." robert continued.

"yes"

"handle your business. either tell her you were joking or just let everyone know that she was scorned or something."

"maybe i could send an e-mail and tell everyone i was joking and leni didn't know that."

"rayman, in all honesty, that may make you look guilty. a straight brother talking about having sex with other men? naw, rayman, that one won't fly."

"aight. i hear you."

"man, i have to go to the store. safa is having one of those cravings. she wants some watermelon with ice cream on top."

"what?" i chuckled.

"yep, she off the hook like that . later."

with that robert hung up the phone.

as i sat back, i thought about our conversation and robert. robert seemed pretty angry when we first started but later on, he seemed to lighten up.

i leaned back and felt a smile cross my face. as i closed my eyes, i thought that maybe robert wasn't really upset about this at all.

ratification

after sitting down from baldwin's for awhile, i decided to just call leni right away and try to find some way to fix this situation.

i didn't want to lose my friendship with robert or cause people to question him, even though i really didn't want to continue to have sex with him. at the same time, i didn't want to cause leni any problems.

with my two basic options in my mind, i dialed her phone number. i didn't think leni would answer. in all honesty, i was expecting to find out she had blocked me. i was really shocked when she answered the phone.

"rayman?"

"yes, it's me."

"i'm so sorry rayman. i'm sorry." leni began to tearfully apologize immediately.

this was not the response i was expecting. apparently, leni felt she was in the wrong. i decided to just go along with it.

"it's ok."

"i know you were just playing around on the computer. i'm sorry for going off like that."

"it's okay, leni."

"i tried calling you, but your phone number was changed. i even came by there, but you weren't home. i was praying that i didn't make you do something to yourself."

"like what?"

"i don't know, something bad."

"naw, i wouldn't hurt myself."

"i'm so glad. i was really worried."

"i got your e-mail."

there was a very long pause. i could hear leni crying on the other end.

"sorry. i'm so so so sorry about that."

"it's ok."

"rayman. it's not your fault. i was just really angry about some other things and for a minute i just thought that you were actually one of those dl brothers that my girlfriends talk about and hiding it from me."

"ok"

"i knew you wouldn't do anything like that. i feel like such an asshole. if you want me to call everyone that i mailed and apologize, i'll do it."

"you don't have to do that."

"i can, at least, e-mail everyone back and apologize. they'll understand."

"leni, it's cool. you don't have to do all that."

"rayman, i just can't believe how cool you're taking this. i would be out of control."

"well."

"i mean, if someone had done something like that to me, i'd really be angry."

"i hear you."

finally, i just couldn't hear it anymore. i was tired of it all. the feelings and inner conflicts rising up within me had filled the pots of contemplation to their very brims and was now spilling over into the basin of action. i had to say something. i couldn't just sit here and let leni feel she had slandered my name. i couldn't drag her through humiliation just to hide my secret.

what happened was more my fault than hers. first, i was not forthcoming about my sexuality. second, i had the audacity to be engaging in that chat with her laying a few feet away.

i don't know if it was some kind of sense of adventure emanating from tasting the forbidden fruits of a clandestine conversation late at night or whether i had internalized some kind of arrogance and sense of condescension towards others.

maybe i did it because i wanted to get caught. was it possible that, deep down, i wanted to be outed so that i could finally confront my sexuality and deal with it?

"leni." i said.

"yes." leni replied gently, she was still softly sobbing.

"it's true."

"what."

"it's true. i have sex with men."

"rayman?" she quizzed in disbelief.

"it's true."

"rayman!" she shouted in a voice of shock and awe mixed with anger.

there was a long pause.

“why didn’t you tell me?” leni asked.

“you never asked.”

“you know, that’s not a reason.”

“i know.”

“how long has it been going on?”

“years.”

“years?”

“you should have told me.”

we paused again.

“you’re right.” i said.

“you could have just told me. that’s all.”

“i know.”

“it’s not fair to people to not tell.”

“ok.”

“i know you wouldn’t understand. only a woman would understand.”

“rayman, can i ask you a question?”

there was a short pause then leni asked her question.

“does robert know you have sex with men?”

i was silent. i didn't know what to say. robert had introduced me to leni and to answer "yes" could destroy their friendship.

"rayman?"

i remained silent. i didn't want to expose robert. i could hear leni sighing heavily in the background.

"my god...my god..my god" leni repeated over and over again, her voice breaking.

i heard leni stifling her sobs on the other end of the phone. i could tell she was truly devastated. leni had trusted and respected robert and now she had just found out that he had introduced her to a man who was an active bisexual.

with a simple lie, i could have spared leni this pain and squashed this entire melodrama. by simply telling leni that i was playing around on the internet the night that she caught me and then saying i am not having sex with men, i could have ended this entire conversation on a happy note and continued on my way.

but, leni deserved honesty. so did i. and, so did robert and everyone else who i was involved with.

the more i stood by the truth, the more i felt more empowered to stand with the truth. there was no turning back now, regardless of what could happen.

"rayman?" leni called, her voice barely audible.

"yes?" i answered.

"are you...are you..have you..slept with robert?"

this was a question i had not expected. if there was a time to lie, this was it. leni knew robert and his family. if i didn't deny having sex with him, it could have catastrophic results for robert, safa, and their child. but, if i did deny it, i was going to find myself right back in the bed of lies and deceit i was trying to escape from.

i tried to stay silent, but the words forced themselves from my lips.

“yes, leni, i am sleeping with robert.”

i heard leni’s stifled sobs come to a sudden end. for a few minutes, i could just hear leni breathing on the other end of the phone.

“when was the last time you slept with him?”

“a few days ago?”

“does safa know?”

“no.”

there was still another pause of a few minutes and then leni began to talk gently, like she normally did.

“rayman, why are you doing this to yourself?”

“i don’t know.” i said. “i just don’t know.”

“rayman?”

“i’m sorry. leni, i’m sorry.” i pleaded.

“rayman. i think we can still maybe be friends, but i need to just step back and get past this.” leni said with an exhausted voice.

“okay, leni.” i responded, feeling equally exhausted.

“is this your new cell number on my caller id?”

“yes.”

“rayman, i have to go. this is just too much.”

as i heard leni, crying so hard, i realized that maybe robert was right. letting leni on to this all was too much. sometimes, people can't handle honesty. i had one other option. i chose it.

"leni?" i said quietly

"yes, rayman?"

"gotcha!" i shouted on the phone.

i laughed in order to make it look as if i were clearly joking.

"what?" i heard her voice perk up.

i started laughing.

"hey, i had to get you back for sending that e-mail out like that!" i chuckled to leni.

"so..so..none of it is true?"

"hell no!" i answered emphatically.

"you don't have sex with men?"

"nope, i don't fuck men, sheep, cows, pigs, or ugly women! –that's so nasty!"

i could hear leni laughing through her tears.

"so, what was all that about on the internet that night?" leni asked.

well, here was the tricky part. i didn't know how long she had been up but i guessed it had only been a few minutes.

"if you would had looked at the screen on my computer closer, you would have noticed that i was just watching the chat but typing on my word processor."

"i didn't notice that, rayman." leni responded.

“of course you didn’t, you were too busy jumping to conclusions!”

i laughed more just to lighten it up further.

there was a small pause.

“oh my god rayman, i am sooooo sorry!” leni apologized

“it’s all good!” i answered.

“am i forgiven?” she asked.

“i don’t know, you’ll have to work for forgiveness!”

“uh huh.” leni responded. she knew what i had in mind.

“but, please e-mail them people and clarify things. i don’t care how you do it..just clarify it. it’s all good.” i added

“ok.” leni answered.

“talk to you tomorrow.” i responded.

“bye.”

“later.”

leni hung up the phone.

i sat there for a long time. by this time, it was pitch black. looking at baldwin’s i could see some dim red lights emanating from the third floor. they were getting freaky up there.

two older brothers walked by my car, wearing plaid coats. it was a little hot for plaid. then again, the summer evening breeze could be a tad cool for some people. these two brothers looked very dignified. as one passed by, i could see the gleaming gold wedding band on his long, dark finger. they passed by my car, went down the block to baldwin’s and entered.

i called robert and he answered his phone after three rings.

“yeah, rayman.” answered robert.

“i called her.”

“fix it?”

“yep, i fixed it.”

“what you mean?”

“i just told her that she didn’t see what she thought she saw.”

“cool!” robert responded.

there was a long pause during which i could hear robert breathing heavily on the other end.
this was so common now.

“well, bruh. it’s all good” robert

“thanks, robert.”

“since that is over. what you doing sunday afternoon?”

“nothing.”

“you want to come over? safa is going to topeka to see some friends.”

“that’s another thing, robert.”

“what?”

“i need some distance.”

“aight.”

“i’m having some issues about having sex with you.”

“oh ok. this leni shit done got into your head?”

“naw, not just her. lots of things.”

“you all right, bruh?”

“i’m not sure.”

“well, rayman, you can just come over and chill. we can watch a ballgame or something. that’s cool.”

“you serious?”

“yeah, bruh. you still my brother.”

“okay, i can deal with that.”

“sounds good, ray.”

“i’ll call you, sunday”

“sounds good.”

i hung up the phone. sitting back in the car, i decided that going over to visit robert on sunday afternoon would be a strong move in a right direction. combined with leni retracting that e-mail, i could slide out of this whole situation unscathed.

by going over there, and not having sex with him, i could maybe start towards some kind of internal healing where i could look at people in my life as not just sexual objects.

robert was a bit older and savvier than me. i was sure that he had talked to lots of brothers who were going through the same thing i was going through. he probably could help me and

give me some real assistance. i was glad that i had robert for a friend. i felt that this entire episode hadn't affected our relationship at all.

i hadn't taken the high road with leni. i wasn't at total peace with my situation. but, at least i felt i was in a place where i could get out with minimal conflict.

arianna

have you ever

been at the grocery store

and got a bag of really nice looking grapes

firm

without those brown splotches

and you just can't wait

to get them home

wash them

pour some in a bowl

and enjoy their sweetness

then

get home

put up the groceries

get relaxed

finally wash the grapes

and then find out

they're not ripe yet

don't you hate that

i hate it

church at st peter's baptist church down on linwood was something that i tried to get to whenever i could. st. peter's was a large baptist church with a rich history but a willingness to keep up with the times.

dr. ralph c. rowland was the current pastor. he was a dynamic speaker and a truly very intelligent man. just before coming to us, he had earned a ph.d. from harvard divinity school. his dissertation was something related to "an analysis of the concept of urban renewal in african american theology". i heard it was pretty good and that he had wrote a series of journal articles.

pastor rowland definitely had an afrocentric flair to him. he had numerous pulpit robes and some of them were made in afrocentric colors with tribal and mask inscriptions. the man had flair.

of course, st. peters was a black church, and there had to be some drama about the pastor. that's just negroes. noone accused pastor rowland of cheating on his wife or anything like that. not yet, anyway. but some so-called "theological purists" had tried to attack his sermon emphasis. "we are to preach about jesus and not black issues", "show me in the bible where it talks about black empowerment", and "we can't save souls while we are criticizing white people" were symptomatic of the some of the criticisms that were directed towards him.

but i liked pastor rowland. he would go into lengthy descriptions about pre-slavery african culture and the horrors of slavery. then, he would eloquently explain how remnants of african culture had survived the decimating effects of slavery and had trickled down to us today. a very descriptive man with a vocabulary full of adjectives, pastor rowland was just plain good.

at the same time, he didn't mind criticizing what he considered to be the whitewashing of christianity. he felt that most biblical interpretation and application was eurocentric in nature and failed to acknowledge the contributions of africa in the history of christianity.

i remember one sunday when he suggested that, while we took pride in our african heritage, we should not try to ply ourselves off as africans. he felt that, because of the obliteration of oral traditions on slave plantations coupled with the rape of black female slaves by white men

and the subsequent intermingling of the races, african americans were an entirely new race. pastor rowland felt we were the newest race, conceived in an incubus of hate, oppression, and pre-slavery cultural suppression. it was an incredibly thought provoking sermon that left the congregation sitting there in a type of shock.

to be honest, i agreed with him. a lot of other people did too.

to be even more honest, i thought he was planning on writing a book about all of this and was actually using us as a type of test audience to gauge potential reactions to what he was saying.

he never preached too much on stuff like fornication, adultery, stealing or things like that. it was like he pretty much had resolved within himself that “negroes are gonna do what they are gonna do” and so there was no need of telling them what we could already reasonably assume that he felt.

it was after a sunday here at st. peters that i was talking to arianna, the wife of an overworked deacon at the church.

that particular sunday, they had served dinner after church and so we were all sitting downstairs relaxing after a simply gluttonous meal of fried chicken, potatoes, macaroni and cheese, green beans, cornbread, cobbler, and all that other good stuff.

arianna was a thick short sister. she was dark skinned and about twenty pounds overweight but really knew how to dress for it. she wore these cute little, perfectly coordinated suits with pastel colors and shiny stockings. she had a cute face with pouty lips and she kept her hair in one of those slightly-above-the-shoulder sassy styles. that was her.

she didn't wear much makeup, she didn't need to. she was cute.

arianna's husband, a tall lean brother who worked as an electrician by day, was clearly neglecting her. they had been married for about six years and it was pretty apparent to me that he had not been giving her the attention she desired.

i actually felt sorry for her. that must really be a letdown, to marry someone and then have the marriage turn out to be a disappointment. especially when you were young and had the looks that led to options.

we were sitting at a table near the entrance to the church social hall, watching the deaconesses scoop the leftovers of our feast into plastic containers, roll up those plaid red tablecloths, and gossip about who was sleeping with who.

arianna's husband was upstairs in a meeting of the deacons and assistant pastors. he was always in meetings. in my opinion, it was like church was another full time job for him. when he came on sundays, he did so much running around i wondered if he had time to hear the sermon. then again, that was his business. i preferred a laid back lifestyle myself. working seven-to-three, five days a week, september to may was enough for me. to hell with the rest.

working all week and then sunday at church -that was kelvin. he was one of those hardworking, do-everything-one-hundred-ten-percent, type of brothers. every sunday, he was there in his fresh black suit with white shirt and black tie. on easter sunday he would wear a white tie. he just looked studious and diligent.

a fairly tall, dark brother with a pock marked face, he wouldn't win any awards for beauty – but he just looked like the kind of man who would be there for whoever needed him.

“do you know a lot about computers, rahman?” arianna asked.

“i got one at home.”

“that's good. i need to learn computers”

“isn't kelvin into computers?”

a look of annoyance shot across her face.

“yes”

i waited for something else to come. and it did.

“but he won’t help me learn the computer. i’ve asked him again and again but he won’t help me. that negro will help everyone else about me”

she was about to get on a roll. i leaned back.

“you know they offer classes and stuff like that” i added.

“i just don’t see why i should have to pay to learn the computer when i got a husband who can teach folks”

“i hear you on that one”

“do you think you could help me on the computer.”

“maybe, i guess.”

“i could pay you.”

“pay me?”

that contradicted what she had just said.

“i wouldn’t mind paying you. you’re a friend.”

“i hear you.”

“well, how would you want me to do it? come over and show you?”

“i could come to your place.” she suggested.

“well, i guess that would work.”

“where do you live?”

“downtown, by the federal reserve.”

“really?”

“yep. i got a loft down there”

“sounds nice.”

“i like it.”

“is parking a problem?”

“no for me. we have a garage attached to the building.”

“that’s nice. sometimes, i wish kelvin and i had not bought a house.”

a few years after marriage, kelvin and arianna had purchased a home in the south part near holmes avenue.

i understood the logic of it all. if you are married and don’t feel like wasting money on rent, then buying a house was the logical answer. even if you were not married, it seemed that buying always beat renting.

arianna told me she had regrets though. she just didn’t like the house that much. it was too small for her and she just felt like it was a cage of some sort. it was the best they could do on their joint income, but it was clearly not her dreamhouse.

in hindsight, she was feeling that she would rather have rented a larger apartment than purchase a smaller house. she was like a lot of folks i knew. they felt home ownership was overrated and not the financial coup that they had been raised to think it would be.

“well, you got a few years equity in it. maybe you could sell and look for something else”

“i suggested that, but kelvin just seems to feel that we need to get at least five years equity before we even think of moving.”

“i guess that makes sense.”

“i guess.”

“so, if you don’t mind me asking...” i asked.

“what?” she replied.

a smile crossed arianna’s face. she liked probing questions. a person who loved to talk, she enjoyed it when i got into her business.

“children. you guys gonna have children?”

“he wants to.”

“and...”

“to be honest...”

she moved closer and lowered her voice. after looking around to make sure noone was near in the nearly empty room, she finished.

“i don’t know if i want to have kids with him....”

“then maybe you shouldn’t have kids. not if you don’t to have them. not with him.”

arianna looked off wistfully.

for a brief moment, my mind ran back.

it was a steaming monday afternoon

in july

i was about ten or eleven years old

sitting on the front porch

analyzing some big, black juicy ants

that i had plucked off the tree
in the front yard
i picked one up
was holding it gently in my fingers
when, a few feet away
the front door slammed with incredible force
so much force, in fact
that it shook the trellis attached to the front porch
and even caused
the porch swing
to swing
it was so shocking
and sudden
and forceful
that i accidentally crushed the ant
that i was holding between
my thumb and forefinger
the creamy beige fluid from
it's full belly

just shot out
and onto my
red, striped shirt
i looked at the front door
and through the cloudy glass
i could see my mother
she had a look
of utter disgust on her face
then she turned
and walked away

i strongly agreed that arianna had no business whatsoever having children with kelvin. none at all. that was clear.

of course, it was pretty obvious that she really didn't plan on leaving this man and so it was a given she was going to eventually bear his children. that was her business. her choice. her life.

the hall was empty. someone had shouted 'turn the lights out when you leave.' a few minutes before and i heard the last few sisters shuffle up the stairs and into the church proper.

it was just arianna and myself. it was quiet and peaceful. upstairs, the men were still meeting or else kelvin would have come downstairs looking for his wife.

then again, on second thought, kelvin had a bad habit of talking to the brothers from church for hours after church. that used to piss arianna off. he wouldn't call and tell her where her was at. their first few months of marriage, it would worry her. now, she just would wait around at home for a minute and then take her shower and go to bed. kelvin was a good man, but he wasn't perfect.

"so, where is your queen?" arianna asked.

arianna was now dipping into my business. of course, she loved to vent about her life but she liked to find out about other folks business too.

"still looking. i'm sure she'll come."

"or you'll have to find her"

"either one, i guess."

"is it hard with both your parents gone?"

"not anymore."

"i wonder how i would feel getting married if my parents weren't there."

"i guess it depends on what kind of parents you had."

"true. do you think your parents would have loved to seen you get married?"

i sat there.

"to be honest, they seemed to come and go on things like that, i just don't know."

inside, i was thinking to myself that my parents probably would have had nothing really positive or supporting to say to me.

for some reason, they seemed to think that every young couple getting married was “in trouble”. i’m sure that if i told them i was getting married, their first accusation would be that someone was pregnant. in that respect, it would be easier for them to be gone.

“my parents didn’t approve of kelvin. not really.” arianna said slowly.

“really?” i asked.

“yeah, they didn’t think he looked good enough. my grandmother felt i should get with a light skinned brother.”

“really?”

i had heard this type of thinking before. but i had never discussed it in depth with anyone.

“my granny felt that two dark skinned folks shouldn’t marry. she felt they made ugly babies with nappy heads and huge lips.”

“shit.” i blurted out. damn, that was cold.

“rahman....” arianna said with a tint of playful sternness as she tapped my shoulder.

i forgot, i was still in church.

arianna laughed. she reached across the table and took my hand.

“sometimes i say ‘shit’ in church too”, she whispered

we both laughed.

“soooooo” i had to ask.

“yes.”

“was your grandmother dark skinned?”

“yes.”

“and your grandfather?”

“medium, sort of brownish.”

“ok. that's deep.”

there was silence for a minute. the church hall was under the church and we could hear some squirrels rustling against the ground level windows.

“are you going to help me on the computer?”

“can i call you?”

“i'd better call you.”

she was right about that. it wasn't like she was single.

“aight”

i scribbled my number on a piece of paper i found in my suit pocket and gave it to her.

she picked her little black purse off the floor, gently folded the paper into a tiny square and hid it back into the purse.

we sat there for about twenty more minutes. nothing was said. verbally that is. it was pretty apparent what was going down.

i had discovered that sometimes it was best to just not say a word. the more you talked, the more you realized the complexity of the situation. so, to keep shit simple, you said very little. this was one of those times.

we sat there for a long, long time

finally, arianna stood up and straightened out her skirt.

“let me find my husband.” she said as she stretched her arms up, looking at the ceiling. her breasts just pushed out against her pink blouse, causing her black suit jacket to slide back a bit. she looked down, just in time to catch me checking out her breasts.

she smiled. i was just being a man.

“you’re out of school....right?” she asked.

i nodded.

“i’m on vacation this week, i’ll give you a call.”

“cool”

and she left.

i sat there for a long, long time.

in all honesty, i didn’t know if i wanted to do this one. kelvin was a good nigga, even if he was neglecting his wife. i’m sure that if i were married and he had the opportunity to fuck my wife, he’d do it. niggaz are like that.

but sometimes, you have to just draw the line based on where you are right then, not where other niggaz are. you can’t create your rules based on the rules of others. you can’t always treat others the way they treat you. i couldn’t believe i was thinking this shit.

i had done that a lot since my parents had died. dick dipping that is. i was dipping my dick in mouths, asses, and pussies all over kansas city. sometimes, i myself couldn’t believe the shit i was doing. i mean it was really, really off the chain.

there were times when i had fucked up to four people in the same day. and, i couldn't remember the last time i had worn a condom. it was like i just didn't give a damn anymore. if it was an open orifice, my dick was going up in it.

but, these bitches and niggaz knew i was all about that. they laying there giving up ass and pussy to niggaz they met forty eight hours before. they knew. i guess that's why it seemed i never talked about sex with the people i was fucking. we just did the shit and talked about everything else.

i would lay there after fucking some married woman and she'd tell me how her and her husband are trying to get financing for a new home or planning a vacation down south or even trying to have another baby.

i mean, she would be laying there with my cum oozing out of her pussy and talking about her husband just as nonchalantly as if we were sitting in a restaurant having a cup of coffee.

it was sort of bizarre once you thought about it. really.

now, i could understand why brothers wouldn't want to talk about fucking just after i had fucked one of them. not one, myself included, considered themselves to be gay or even bisexual.

i think i talked about this shit in an earlier session.

but, as i was saying. after fucking a nigga, we would just lay there and usually not say a fucking word. with sisters, it seemed that as soon as they had a good hard orgasm, they could talk on and on about everything from buying towels on the plaza to finding parking at the airport to menstrual cramps.

niggaz just closed down. they didn't talk about pussy or sports, which usually were their most popular topics. usually, they just shut the fuck up and then rushed into the shower and found a reason to leave.

it really didn't make a difference to me. i can't say that it was because i had "got mines" because i didn't cum every time. in fact, i rarely came with men. either he had a supertight ass or some hella tongue skills or i couldn't bust a nut.

with women, i came more frequently, but not all the time. sometimes, a woman would have her orgasm and then try to coach me to cum and i'd lie and claim i had ejaculated or just say "i want to hold it for the next time." when i had no intention of fucking her again that day.

busting a nut isn't all it's cracked up to be for a man. really. true, it's a few seconds of some seriously off the chain pleasure, but the letdown after the fact tends to mute that.

even though men seem to make the most noise and pound the hardest before they cum, it's really all the shit leading up to those last few minutes that is the most pleasurable. women who like fuck other women's men know this for a fact.

sunday afternoon was fading away. robert's wife was in topeka and so i had agreed to go over robert's house and just chill.

i honestly thought robert would be upset about the fact that mess with leni, but he seemed to be over it.

i left and headed for robert's place.

session 15

*is it possible to raise a black child
to be
a black man
so that he isn't fucked up
in some way?
it's not the 'white man'
that's the problem
but it's other niggaz
i mean
look at the music that is aimed
at black children
talking about bitches and hoes
making it look like being a black man
is about being baby's daddy
or some thug
or player*

*even if you roll the clock back
to the so-called good music
you got superfly and shaft
and the isley brothers
talking about
fight the power
it's like a black boy can either
be a thug
or a player
or some kind of militant
or
a sellout
and then noone likes him
white folks feel they own him
black folks feel he betrayed them
and he feels
he belongs nowhere
sometimes*

i felt i fit into that last group

the nursery at robert's house was just like the rest of the his home. it had that afrocentric theme from the children's oriented wallpaper featuring african characters, to the imported crib and furniture that looked like it had been carved from the trunk of some massive dark tree, to the tiny wooden jungle animals that hung from the roof. the sound system itself played music that sounded like the rhythmic pounding of drums from somewhere deep in the congo. it was definitely different.

i knew safa had decorated this room. robert didn't have the patience to scour around town rounding up shit this unique. to be honest with you, i doubt much of this stuff came from kansas city. knowing safa, she found it on the internet somewhere and then imported it all.

i could tell safa was really into the 'baby experience' and all the looks and trinkets that go with having a baby. she was a classy lady and she had the man with the income to let her be as classy as she wanted.

then again, safa was no slouch either. she was very well educated and had quite some success in some kind of marketing arena before she hooked up with robert. that had been more than a minute ago and so i was sort of hazy on the details.

then again, i wasn't fucking her – i was fucking her husband. so, i guess like a lot of things, it was mute.

"slick huh?", robert groaned in my ear as i stood in the doorway checking it out.

he was standing behind me, resting his arms on my shoulders. his tongue was steadily moving around my ear, in my ear, all over the lobe, and down the side of my neck. he was horny. i wasn't.

to be honest, i really didn't want to fuck robert that day. the thrill of watching him go through his gyrations while my dick plunged in and out of his ass was starting to wear off.

to be honest, i was starting to wonder if i was really getting anything out of this shit. it wasn't like the nigga was paying any of my bills.

if i was some bitch, i bet he'd be covering either my rent or my car note.

but this motherfucker was getting the milk for free. straight up. and i was starting to get tired of it.

i don't know why i was starting to get tired. maybe i was starting to be selfish but i felt i should get more out of this than the experience of watching his fat sweaty black ass shoot a stream of cum onto the sheets.

"it's nice robert" i replied checking it out.

in the back of my mind, i was thinking of a way to get out of this nigger's house without fucking him. i really wasn't up to it.

"twenty five hundred dollars." robert casually said as he raised his from my shoulder and pointed at the crib.

"imported from liberia." he added.

i was right. the stuff had been imported

"three thousand dollars."

he pointed at the dresser.

“wallpaper. five hundred dollars.”.

“nightstand. eight hundred dollars.”

robert ran down the price of each item in this room. he had spent a fortune on baby furniture.

as we walked back towards the living room, robert added.

“and that bitch will want all new shit before the year was up.”

somehow, i could believe that.

it was kind of deep to hear that, but not surprising. for a long time, i had been telling myself that robert was simply a brother that liked to have fun on the side.

as i had mentioned before, he had a potpourri of partners, male and female.

but, despite my admittedly twisted perception of marriage, something had to be wrong. if a man had to go outside of his supposedly monogamous relationship to find physical gratification there was something wrong, either with the relationship or with him.

of course, robert liked to write it off as “experiencing it all.”

regardless, i really didn't want to be here. not at all. in a way, i was still thinking of my conversation with arianna. in a way, i felt a weird obligation to fuck her. it was obvious things were leading to that. but in another weirder way, i just didn't want to.

we entered the living room and i sat down in one of those tall chairs that looked like it could belong to a tribal chieftan. i was grateful that it had a cushion on it. in between the hardened pews at church and the metal seats in the church basement, my ass was plumb wore out.

with some effort, robert knelt down in front of me. he had on a black and red dashiki over some knit black slacks. the dashiki had a really nice and intricate pattern.

i ran my hand across the front of it. it was embroidered. that was the real deal. it wasn't some tired ass fake dyed dashiki you could for \$20.00 over on van brunt somewhere.

robert began unzipping my pants and fishing for my dick. "maybe i could just get him off with a blow job today", i thought as he reached his hands in between my boxer briefs and pulled out my flaccid dick.

"wake up...wake up." robert playfully whispered to my dick as he began to run his tongue all over it. he did his typical routine : tongue up the shaft and around the head and back down, tongue around and under the balls. pushing up my shirt, robert ran his tongue all the way up to my navel.

i had to admit, the man had a large and thick tongue. it felt like some kind of giant wet warm slug moving slowly up and down between my navel and my testicles.

i just wasn't feeling it. i wanted robert to stop.

"yo, robert" can you stop for a minute?

"sure, ray"

robert sat back. he looked deep at my eyes. it was pretty obvious he thought i wanted something else.

"what would you like for me to do? give you this big black ass again?"

"no, it's not that."

"what is it, then?"

"i'm just not feeling it today."

"why not?" robert asked

there was silence for a second.

"you need to explain brother." robert said a voice tinged with a bit of irritation.

robert squinted. i could hear him sighing inside with irritation. robert's aggressiveness was starting to come out.

"i just don't feel like it." i said.

"okay...okay...you don't feel it"

“yeah”

robert stood up and started to walk away

i stood up and started for the door.

then i stopped and myself “why was i leaving?”. why was i depriving myself? if i wanted some pleasure, some harmless pleasure, what was the problem? i was grown. it was my business. i was tired of all these convoluted feelings of guilt over my lifestyle.

“fuck the world.” i said to myself “i’m going to do what the hell i want.”

i turned around and saw robert standing in the doorway of the guest bedroom. robert looked back and then he went in.

i smiled, turned around, and followed robert into the bedroom.

as i followed robert into his bedroom, i thought ahead for the rest of the week. i would probably fuck leni sometime the next day. raynall’s wife worked doubles at the hospital every other tuesday so he would be available on tuesday. i remembered coach telling me that his wife was going to a conference on tuesday night. maybe, i could meet him at the hotel on wednesday. arianna had said something about her husband going to a men’s bible conference next weekend. i could get her over my place late friday or saturday night. and, of course, i didn’t want to forget about renee.

by the time i reached the bedroom, robert was nearly nude.

epilogue

i remember an incident that took place in my second grade classroom. it was in catholic school, as a matter of fact. we were all sitting there in our neat little desks facing the nun and she was explaining to us that when good people die, they go to heaven. she explained to us that god was in heaven also.

being the young einstein that i was, i put two and two together and raised my hand. if good people died and went to heaven, and god was in heaven – then he must have been one of those good people who died. so i asked,

“when did god die?”

the nun, i think her name was sister agnes, gently responded to my inquiry

“god isn’t dead. he’s here right now”.

so i sat there for a few more minutes and then i just had to ask again so i raised my hand.

“when did god die?”

sister agnes in her crisp nun’s habit, old and white, gazed at me through a face etched with deep wrinkles.

“sweetheart” she said so gently, “god isn’t dead – he’s here with us today”.

i never asked that question again.

don’t ask me why – i have no clue.

it was another steamy hot and muggy day in kansas city. i had stayed trapped in my apartment all day long. it was just too damn steamy to go out, even for sex. of course, the night would be something different.

i was in some shorts, sitting placidly in my window, feeling the cool central air land on my naked back and peering down on the streets below. in my left hand, i fondled a small brown card i had just fished from out of my wallet. there was a phone number and then a test number scrawled on it.

this was a call i had to make. it was one that i had needed to make over the past few months.

i wanted to call but i didn't want to call. this summer had been enough of a struggle of itself, starting that damned chat room conversation, the confrontation with leni, and all those thoughts swirling in my head. why did i feel i had an obligation to make this call? other people did their thing and didn't worry about the possible consequences! why should it be any different for me?

i picked up my phone and called the number.

i had thought about making this call for a long time. i knew that i had engaged in some high risk sexual practices with lots of men and women. but, did i really want to know what the end would be? and, if the answer was something that would affect others, would i want to run down all these people and tell them? isn't that their problem? has leni, or raynall, or coach, or renee paid any of my bills? hell no! none of them have paid a single bill of mine or put a single scrap of food on my plate. why should i be so worried about their lives?

a young female voice sweetly answered the phone. it sounded busy on the other end. i could hear multiple voices in the background, a radio, and the clacking noise of keyboards being worked.

"kansas city free health clinic." the female asked.

i paused for a second.

i wondered if i should hang up. there's already been enough drama, did i want anymore?

"my test number is 664225-a." i responded.

when i had taken the test a few months ago, they gave me a card with a number and told me to just call back and give the number. from what i understood, if the test were negative they just told you it were negative. if it were positive, they offered counseling. i wasn't sure if that was totally correct. it had been several months since i had been tested.

the only reason i took the test was because a friend asked me to take it with her. she didn't want to do it alone. her test came out negative. a few weeks later, i lied to her and told her that i had called and they told me it was negative. i had never called. i had no reason to. i just told her that so she would quit asking.

in fact, i had no reason to call now. but, i had just found this card in my wallet and figured i might as well call before i tossed it into the trash.

"please hold." the lady on the other end answered dutifully.

there was a pause of a few minutes.

it's my life. who are other people to judge and tell me that i need a test? who are other people to tell me what i need to tell others about my life. it's none of their business. they have the problem, not me! if they don't trust me, they can just leave me the hell alone!

i could hear keys clicking on the background, followed by a pause and then some muffled talking. first it was her voice, then another voice, and then finally, a male voice came over the phone.

did i really want to know this? it would screw up everything. in fact, i could become liable if i knowingly gave something to someone. i'm not a punk, i'm a man, a black man. this is my life and noone tells me what to do with it. i do what i want, how i want, and when i want. if others get hurt - it's not my problem. leni, raynall, robert, coach, renee – they are all grown people

and know what's involved. not one of them asked me to wear a condom. so, if something is wrong – it's not my problem.

"hello, this is dr. livrin....."

i hung up the phone.

to hell with dr. livin, the clinic, and that jacked up test.

to hell with the world! rayman jackson is going to do what rayman jackson wants. i'm out for mines and if someone gets in my way – they just get run over!

sitting there for a minute, i looked out the window over the hot kansas city landscape. it was another one of those days where things seemed to move in slow motion. the sky was clear and there some pigeons floating in the distance. it was near the start of the hour and i could see a caravan of tired city buses crawl out from the big stop on main street and begin to divide up into their different routes. i saw businessmen in their dark suits walking with their briefcases and little children coming out from a daycare hand-in-hand. it was another beautifully surreal day in my life.

i picked up the phone again and dialed a different number. another female voice answered.

"hello?" she asked.

"leni?", i responded.

"hey rayman! what's up?", she answered enthusiastically.

"what are you doing tonight?"

"nothing."

"is seven thirty cool?" i asked.

"i'll be waiting for you! bring some more peppermints, i'm almost out!", leni responded.

she laughed

and, i laughed.

and life goes on.

peace